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THE INDEPENDENT

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Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Blair, Ahern and Mitchell seal historic agreement 17 hours after passing of talks deadline

Peace at last for Ulster

By David McKitterick
Ireland Correspondent

THE people of Northern Ireland were promised peace yesterday as an historic agreement offered a way out of 30 years of violent conflict.

After a night and day of drama, the exhausted politicians hammered out last minute differences and produced a potentially ground-breaking document. Tony Blair, the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and the talks chairman George Mitchell sealed the deal at 5pm yesterday, 17 hours after the original deadline for an agreement.

A great many loose ends remain and many political obstacles lie ahead, but the sense that a new beginning had been made was palpable both at the talks themselves and on the streets of Belfast. A woman who walked through the city centre said: "I saw people with tears in their eyes. I shed a few myself."

They were tears of relief rather than of victory, for the agreement produced yesterday was composed of scores of compromises stitched together in a 69-page document combining points made by the two governments and the eight parties at the table.

Minutes after the deal was agreed, Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, appeared on the steps of Stormont Castle to declare victory.

"I believe today courage has triumphed. I said when I arrived here on Wednesday night that I felt the hand of history upon us. Today I hope that the burden of history can at long last start to be lifted from our shoulders," he said.

"It will take more of the courage we have shown, but it needn't mean more of the pain."

He said all that the people of Northern Ireland wanted was to live without fear but the agreement was only the beginning.

"Today we have just a sense of the prize that is before us. The work to win that prize goes on. We cannot, we must not let it slip."

Mr Blair said that the agreement enshrined fairness and equality for the population of Northern Ireland. But he said: "This will not work unless we extend a hand of friendship to those who were our foes."

Echoing these sentiments, Bertie Ahern, the Irish prime minister, said the agreement was about the promise of a brighter future. "Today we hope a line can be drawn under a bloody past."

It would mean the radical transformation of all the key relationships in the island and a process of continuing change on the ground, but he said: "Equality, co-operation and

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partnership threaten nobody."

"If the focus remains in the past, the past will become the future and that is something no one desires ... Today's agreement is a victory for peace and democratic politics. We must seize the initiative."

However, Mr Ahern added that his ultimate political aspiration remained the coming together of all the people of Ireland "achieved peacefully and with consent".

David Trimble, of the Ulster Unionist Party, said they had been concerned that the new assembly would have allowed parties related to the paramilitaries to get close to the heart of the administration. But, he said, they had been reassured.

Mr Mitchell praised Mr Blair and Mr Ahern for their efforts. At a final session, he spoke of the "remarkable experience" of his involvement in the peace process.

He said: "I have that bitter-sweet feeling that comes in life. I am dying to leave but I hate to go."

"I have been all over the world and I have never been any place where there are better people."

The agreement is still not final since two of the most important elements involved, the Ulster Unionists and Sinn Féin, must sell it to grassroots which will include many with doubts about the new course of give and take which it sketches out.

But it represents a triumph for almost all involved, in particular the local representatives who made a successful transition from the politics of demand to the politics of negotiation. Their next task will take them into the politics of marketing, and eventually of co-operation.

The official talks deadline had been set as midnight on Thursday but with no agreement in sight at that point bargaining went on through the night. It was not until late afternoon that an agreed text was completed.

Some final hours of delay were caused when the Ulster Unionists indicated concerns on a number of points. Reports circulated that senior party members were split on the advisability of signing up for the deal, with speculation that hard-liners were fighting a rear-guard action.

The deal will set up an intricate structure based around a new Belfast assembly linked to a new north-south institution, together with new connections to the devolved assemblies in Cardiff and Edinburgh.

The document also envisages moves towards the release of paramilitary prisoners, including the increasing of remission from the present one-half to two-thirds.



It's a deal: Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair outside Stormont yesterday after striking an agreement on Ulster Photograph: Peter Macdonald

Four feared dead in floods havoc

By Kate Watson-Smyth

ONE PERSON was drowned and three more, including a 14-year-old boy, were missing yesterday as torrential rain brought the worst flooding for a century to parts of Britain.

The body of a middle-aged man was recovered from a flooded caravan park on the banks of the Avon near Evesham, after the floods left hundreds of people homeless.

Police and firefighters carried out a series of rescue operations across the Midlands, Buckinghamshire and Oxford-

shire as forecasters predicted more rain at the start of the Easter weekend.

Norman Edgington, regional manager of the National Rivers Authority, said: "The flooding in the river Avon area is the worst since records began in 1900 - the river is 15 metres above its normal level."

Firefighters worked round the clock to save people from the River Mead Caravan Park, in Worcestershire, after the river Arrow rose by four metres during the middle of the night and the site was engulfed.

Families huddled together

on top of their caravans as water swept through the park, reaching roof level in some parts. Some were winched to safety by helicopter and others were rescued by boat.

One rescue boat struck a submerged tractor and the two firemen and four caravanners were tipped into the swirling water in the pitch darkness. They were eventually found by another rescue boat but two residents were still unaccounted for last night.

David O'Dwyer, chief of Hereford and Worcester fire service, said all of the brigade's

800 firefighters worked round the clock to rescue people. "The water on the caravan sites was at least 6ft deep in places and the river speed is running at 11 knots which is extremely fast," he said.

In Warwickshire, rescue teams were yesterday searching for a 14-year-old boy who disappeared when a van was swept from a flooded road into a ditch at Eathorpe, near Leamington Spa.

The van was washed into the ditch as it tried to overtake broken down vehicles stranded in floodwater. It was quickly sub-

merged but the driver managed to climb on to the roof and was eventually rescued by a police officer. The boy could not be found however. Steve West, Warwickshire Ambulance Service's director of operations, described as the conditions as "desperate" and said they feared the worst.

Hopes were also fading for a 33-year-old woman believed to have fallen from a narrowboat on a flooded river in Northampton.

More than 300 people were rescued from their homes and moved to emergency centres in

Buckingham and Banbury, Oxfordshire, where the torrential rain caused the river Cherwell and the Oxford Canal to merge. An RAF Sea King helicopter was called out to rescue 19 anglers who became stranded in the middle of a lake near Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, after the water level rose by 9ft in an hour.

Thousands of rail passengers endured delays of more than six hours when flash flooding hit train services through Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and around Milton Keynes.

Photographs: page 4

Britain 'in Anglo-Saxon plot to spy on Europe'

By John Lichfield
in Paris

BRITAIN belongs to a consortium of electronic espionage agencies in the Anglo-Saxon world which systematically eavesdrops on business and economic secrets in European Union countries.

This allegation will be made next month in a report commissioned by the European Parliament, which will denounce Britain's role as a double-agent, spying on its own European partners.

A draft of the report, leaked to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, says British intelligence services belong to network called Echelon, which also includes United States, Australian and

New Zealand spy agencies. The network intercepts and shares information from 100 million private telephone, fax and e-mail messages a day.

Although this global bugging operation combats the airwaves for classic intelligence and criminal information, it also targets sensitive business and economic secrets, especially in Europe. Key words, such as the names of companies or commodities, are fed into the computers at listening stations in Britain, the US, Australia and New Zealand. Telephone messages containing these words are automatically intercepted and recorded. They are then sent to the National Security Agency, the American electronic intelligence service, in the suburbs of Washington DC.

Information, including business information, which might interest the individual Echelon countries is decrypted, analysed and sent back.

"It is profoundly shocking and should provoke a general outcry," said Jean-Pierre Millet, a French lawyer specialising in computer crime. "Britain's European partners have a right to be furious but [the British] won't abandon their pact with the US."

According to *Le Figaro*, other EU governments have known of the existence of Echelon, and Britain's part in it, for seven years. They have chosen to make no public complaint but instead warn companies of the dangers of transmitting sensitive information on international telephone lines, which use satellite links.

Small-minded designers put tall people's backs up

By Clare Garner

TALL people may stand out in the crowd, but they are still being overlooked. Beds are too short, doorways and desks too low, bus and train seats too cramped - and consequently Britain is losing an estimated 70 million working days each year.

Members of Britain's Tall Person's Club are bearing down on the country's midget-minded manufacturers, demanding that they update their standard sizes. Phil Heinrich, the 6ft 8in founder of the club, set out to improve life for society's tallest individuals, but the fact that the population as a whole is growing - taller, that is - means height discrimination is a matter for more of us than we might think.

Every generation grows at the rate

of approximately 0.75 inches, yet the standards with which people have to contend on a daily basis are in many cases between 50 to 100 years old.

This country loses 70 million working days each year because of backache, and much of that is caused by design which does not take this growth into account. The situation will get worse unless standards are changed."

The club is preparing to host the annual European Convention for Tall People between 17 and 24 May at various venues across London.



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Inquiry call after death of casualty patient

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE PARENTS of a boy who died from a fractured skull after a hospital allegedly refused to examine him because he was abusive and violent have called for a public inquiry into his death.

Gordon-Scott Niven, 16, was taken to Glasgow's Victoria In-

firmary after falling off his mountain bike, but while waiting to be examined he became abusive and hospital staff called police.

He was arrested and later examined by a police surgeon who suspected a serious injury and returned him to hospital.

A brain scan confirmed that he had a fractured skull, and he

was transferred to the neurological unit at Southern General Hospital. But he slipped into a coma and by the following morning he was diagnosed as brain dead. The next day his parents, Gordon and Pat agreed to turn off his life support machine.

David Wilson, the family's solicitor, said the Procurator Fiscal had now finished his report

on Gordon's death and submitted it to the Lord Advocate who will decide if there should be a fatal accident inquiry.

A spokesman for the hospital said: "Obviously the hospital's thoughts are with the family following this tragedy. However, while patient care is our priority we have a duty to protect our staff and must call

the police when patients become violent and abusive."

The accident happened on 23 September when Gordon was out riding his bicycle with a friend near his home in the Shorelands district of Glasgow. Mr Wilson said he was trying to do tricks on a ramp when he fell off and hit his head.

"He started behaving very

erratically when he arrived at the hospital but that can be a characteristic of head injuries," he said.

"It is alleged that he assaulted a nurse and said that he had been drinking alcohol, but Mrs Niven told the doctor that her son did not drink."

"The consultant said he was fit to be arrested and he was taken

to a police cell where he was left in a cell for an hour-and-a-half."

Mr Wilson said it was nearly five hours after the accident before Gordon had a brain scan and was transferred to the neurological unit.

"It is accepted that the boy was behaving erratically but having him arrested was not the

answer. He had an injury that proved to be fatal and he had a right to treatment. Gordon died in very traumatic circumstances and his last hours must have been terrifying," he said.

"His parents find it hard to believe that there was no negligence given that there was a failure to diagnose and a failure to treat."

Welsh clerics will report sex abusers

By Roger Dobson

MORE than 8,000 clergy and members of the Church in Wales have signed a child protection declaration that they will agree to police checks designed to weed out paedophiles.

Child protection panels have been set up in each of the dioceses, and later this month the Church in Wales governing body will hear a report which says that clergy who hear confessions should make the welfare of children paramount.

"Matters of conflicting loyalty or responsibility, such as the seal of the confessional, should be clarified, in discussions with the bishop if necessary," says a report prepared for the governing body.

It adds: "Evidence or suggestions of physical abuse, neglect, emotional or sexual abuse in a child should never be ignored. This may include evidence of bruises, challenging behaviour, sexualised behaviours, constant hunger, inadequate clothing or supervision, or involvement in child pornography."

It goes on: "Every individual

has a responsibility to report immediate, serious concerns about the care of a child urgently to the proper authorities, usually social services. Any rumours concerned child protection issues must be dealt with urgently."

Church spokesman, the Rev David Williams, said recently: "The report is making the point that the welfare of the child transcends everything else. The declaration people have signed says that they are not aware of anything in their past backgrounds that makes them unsuitable to work with children, and giving permission for a police check to make sure there is no record of a conviction."

In the child protection document, the church says that every parish has a duty to provide a safe environment for children by ensuring that any disclosure, discovery or suspicion of abuse is dealt with in an appropriate way.

Bishops are responsible for appointing diocesan child protection officers who will set up child protection groups made up of six to eight professionals.



Easter song: The Royal Opera House chorus in rehearsal, under their director, Terry Edwards, at the Barbican, London

Photograph: Laurie Lewis

Caravan boy killed by gas

A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD boy died of carbon monoxide poisoning in a Scottish seaside caravan park, police said. Gary Stewart, from the West Port area of Dundee, on holiday with his grandparents, was discovered by relatives yesterday at Seaton Caravan Park in Arbroath, Tayside.

Police are not treating the death as suspicious.

It is believed the boy and his

grandparents arrived shortly before the tragedy and were renting the caravan locally. The owner of the park arrived at the scene around 2pm yesterday with a police inspector but declined to comment.

Later it emerged that the youngster's grandparents, who have not been named, are in Strathguthrie Hospital in Brechin. The grandmother was taken there with a suspected stroke.

Her husband was also taken to hospital when he suffered a heart attack after his grandson's body was discovered. The family had been intending to stay in the caravan over the Easter weekend.

Health and Safety Executive inspectors were at the scene. A spokesman said: "The ... executive are investigating and will submit a report to the Procurator Fiscal."

Freedom blow for jailed soldiers

A CAMPAIGN for the early release of two Scots Guards serving life sentences for the murder of a civilian in Belfast suffered a setback yesterday after a council banned a march.

More than 100 veterans from the regiment planned to stage the demonstration in Glasgow city centre in support of Mark Wright, from Arbroath and Jim Fisher from Ayr, who were jailed in 1992 for the murder

of Peter McBride. Mr McBride was shot and killed when he ran away from the soldiers after they stopped him for questioning.

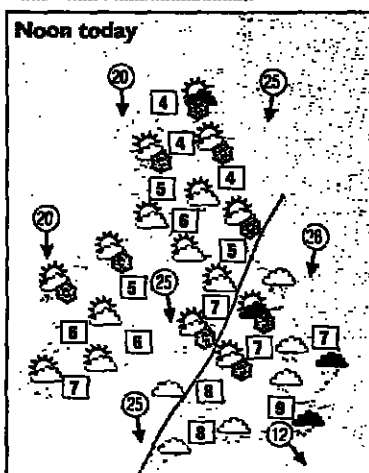
Bill Ritchie, 63, a former Scots Guard, who was hoping to organise the event for 25 April, criticised Glasgow City Council for blocking the rally. He said: "We are very disappointed ... We saw this as a peaceful demonstration, but

the council said it did not want to get involved in Northern Ireland issues, and it is them not us who have turned this into a political demonstration."

A council spokesman said the decision not to grant permission had been taken on police advice. He said there was "blanket ban" on Northern Ireland demonstrations in the city centre, but organisers had been offered an alternative venue.

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WEATHER



Scotland will have another very cold and windy day with sunshine and snow showers. Most of the showers will be in the north with moderate falls of snow over hills. Northern Ireland will be bright with some sunshine, but there will be a cold wind and scattered wintry showers. Most of England and Wales will be cloudy and cold with showery rain and hill-snow. However, brighter weather in the northern and western fringes will edge slowly south-east.

British Isles weather

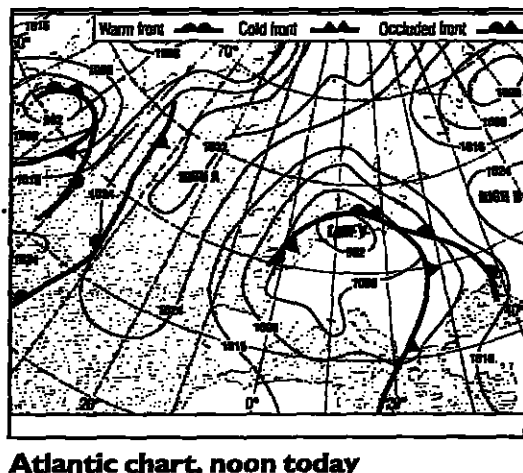
Most recent available figures at noon local time

C: Cloudy; D: Clear; F: Fog; H: High; L: Low; M: Mist; R: Rain; S: Sunny; S: Snow; Sh: Showers; St: Storm; T: Thunder

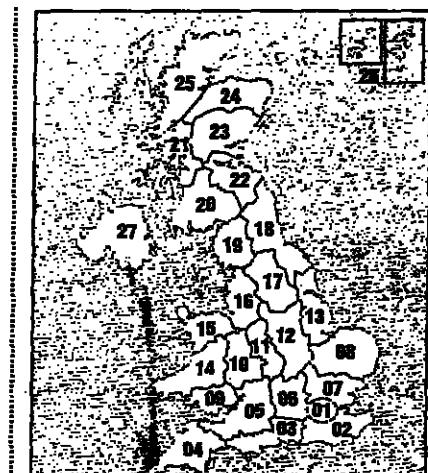
Aberdeen	Sh	4-9	Glasgow	R	5-11
Angus	Sh	6-13	Inverness	Sh	3-7
Ayr	C	7-15	Leicester	Sh	7-15
Belfast	C	7-15	London	Sh	6-13
Birmingham	R	4-9	Manchester	Sh	6-13
Blackpool	C	6-13	Newcastle	F	5-11
Bournemouth	R	5-11	Oxford	C	5-11
Brighton	C	8-16	Plymouth	Sh	6-13
Bristol	R	4-9	Scarborough	Sh	5-11
Cardiff	C	4-9	Southampton	R	5-11
Carlisle	F	7-15	Stirling	H	4-9
Derby	C	8-16	Stornoway	H	4-9
Doncaster	C	8-16	York	C	6-13

Outlook for the next few days
Tomorrow will be cold again everywhere with frost early and late. Most places will see good sunny spells, but also wintry showers, the heaviest of these in northern Scotland where strong winds will lead to drifting snow on the hills. Monday will also be cold with wintry showers in the north and east, but south-western areas should get some sunshine. The chilly weather will continue on Tuesday and Wednesday.

World weather	
Most recent available figures at noon local time	
Algeria	110 84
Amsterdam	19 56
Antwerp	18 50
Athens	22 73
Bahia	23 75
Bombay	28 79
Bangkok	30 87
Batavia	30 86
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Atlantic chart, noon today			
Low W will continue to drift slowly east and deepen. High A will start to drift south maintaining its intensity. High H will move eastwards.			
Lighting-up times			
Belfast	20.19	...	...
Birmingham	19.59	...	...
Bristol	20.00	...	...
Cardiff	20.15	...	...
London	19.50	...	...
Manchester	20.02	...	...
Newcastle	20.02	...	...



Air quality			
Yesterday's readings			
London	Good	20	Good
S. England	Good	20	Good
Wales	Good	20	Good
C. England	Good	20	Good
N. England	Good	20	Good
Scotland	Good	20	Good
N. Ireland	Good	20	Good

Outlook for today			
London	Mod	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good	Good
C. England	Good	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good	Good

High tides			
London	AM	HT	PM
London	02:38	7.0	14:56
Liverpool	12:05	9.1	00:21
Avonmouth	08:00	12.7	20:19
Hull (Albert Dock)	07:10	8.2	19:18
Glasgow	01:27	3.0	13:21
Dun Laoghaire	12:25	3.9	00:34

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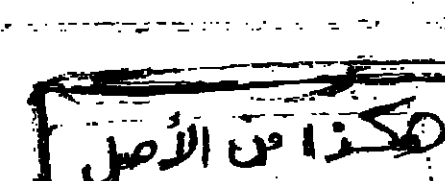
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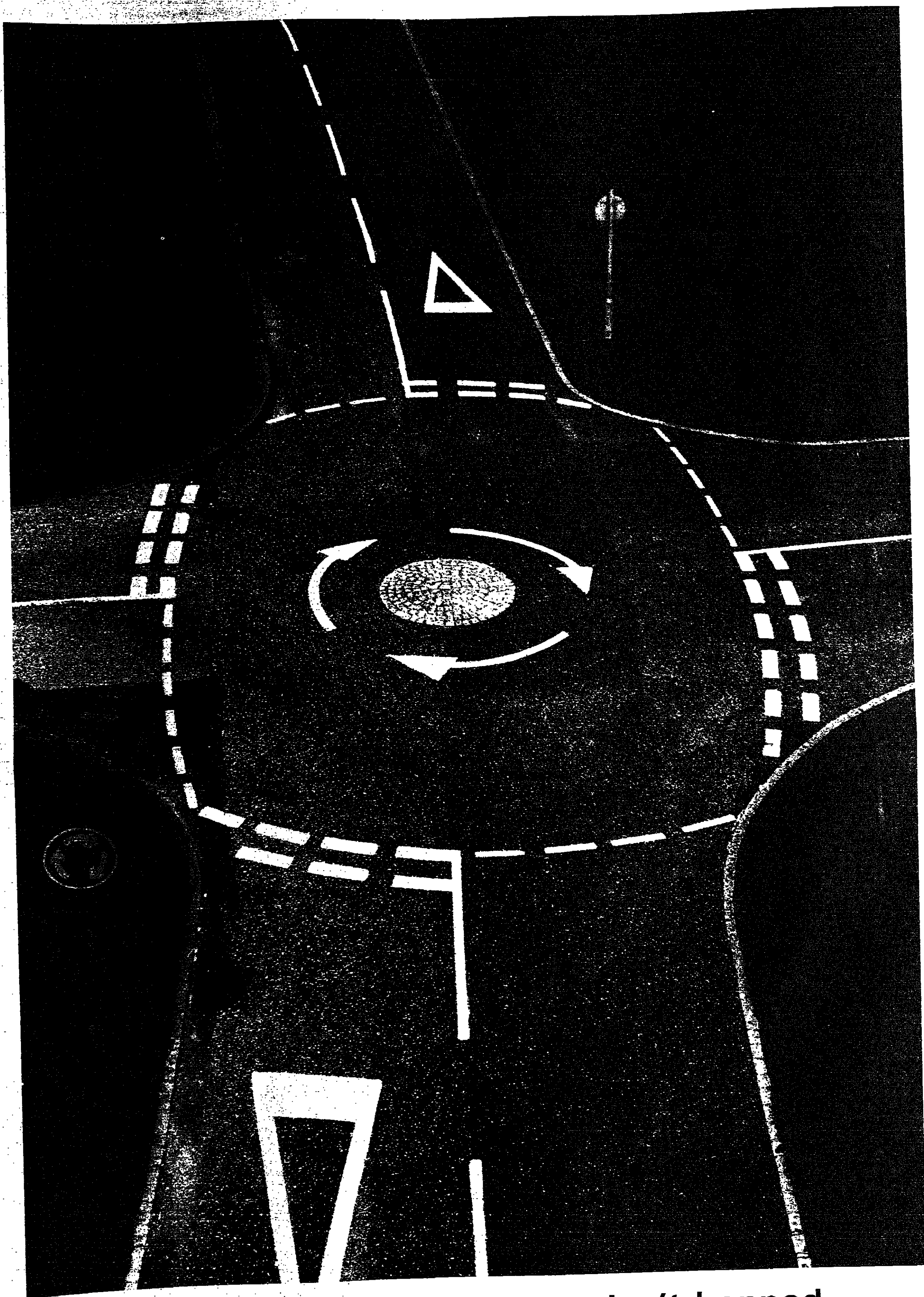
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Britain sounds off about noise laws

By Anthony Bevin
Political Editor

THE DAYS of the dawn chorus of garden equipment are numbered. The spring-time cacophony of lawnmower trimmers and motorised garden hoes, with orchestration from pneumatic drills, concrete mixers, chain saws, leaf-blowers and wood-shredders is being tackled by Brussels.

But the initiative is being opposed by Britain as the Government digs in for a fight against elements of the tough new anti-noise laws proposed by the European Commission.

As the lead is being taken by the Department of Trade and Industry, rather than the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions - which "has an interest in the environmental aspects of noise" - the business aspects of the new directive appear to dominate the response. John Battle, the minister for science, energy and industry, says in a formal memorandum to Parlia-

ment: "The UK supports the main aims of the directive which are the removal of technical barriers to trade, the simplification of old noise directives and the improvement of the environment."

But he then protests about the unnecessary complications and particular expense of the measures for small and medium-size companies. "The UK believes the amount of environmental benefit to be gained from the measures is not proportionate to the burdens and costs that will be placed on industry."

Mr Battle reserves his strongest attack for the methods the Commission is proposing to use to measure the noise - something called ISO 4871 - the International Organisation for Standardisation noise test for machinery and equipment.

"The UK is strongly opposed to the use of ISO 4871," Mr Bartle says. The test takes the manufacturers' guaranteed noise level and then builds in an automatic noise cushion

of an additional 3 decibels - for "measurement uncertainty".

As described by Mr Battle, the ISO 4571 system is so complex that it reads like instructions for the assembly of a wood-shredder, poorly translated from Chinese. And the minister complains that the entire process will cost UK industry something in the region of £278m over the eight-year life of the directive.

The DTI estimates that there are 250 companies affected, with 30,000 employees and combined sales of about £4bn a year.

The directive will cover 55 types of equipment, including chain-saws, concrete-mixers, petrol-fuelled grass-trimmers, hedge-trimmers, leaf-blowers, road-sweepers, refuse collection vehicles, wood-shredders and chippers. Lawnmowers are already covered, but curbs are also proposed for nine additional items of equipment, including mobile cranes, dumper trucks, electric lawn-trimmers and motorised garden hoes.

Harmony of Good Friday procession masks turmoil at Westminster Abbey



Raphael Moanzu, an asylum-seeker, en route from Central Methodist Hall to Westminster Cathedral and Abbey. Photograph: Tom Piltson

Dean fails to resolve row with organist over finances

By Clare Garner

AS the annual Crucifixion procession concluded at Westminster Abbey yesterday at lunchtime, all appeared peaceful and harmonious. But behind the scenes a most unholy row was rumbling on.

Among the religious figures leading the procession on Good Friday was the Dean of Westminster, the Very Rev Dr Wesley Carr, the man at the heart of the internal dispute at Westminster Abbey. Dr Carr has failed to resolve an acrimonious fall-out between himself and the abbey's long-serving organist and choirmaster following his accusation of "irregularities" in the choir accounts.

While Easter services at the abbey will go ahead as usual, they will be without the guiding hand of the organist, Dr Martin Neary, who is regarded as one of the finest church musicians in Britain and who was decorated by the Queen for his musical direction at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Dr Neary and his wife, Penny, who worked as his assistant, have been questioned by Dr Carr and Canon Middleton, the Canon Treasurer, with reference to the accounts for all the choir's tours and recordings over the past 10 years, and have been suspended from duties pending a decision.

Dr Neary has denied the allegations in what Frank Field, the Social Security Secretary



Wesley Carr: At heart of dispute rocking the Abbey

and a devout High Church Anglican, has dubbed "a kangaroo court". As a Royal Peculiar, Westminster Abbey is outside the diocesan system and is under the personal jurisdiction of the Queen. Dr Neary, 58, is expected to appeal against his dismissal to the Queen, and it is thought that the Queen will appoint the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, to act on her behalf.

Dr Carr caused another upset at the abbey in the run-up to Easter by announcing last week that he plans to introduce an upper age-limit of 75 for volunteers, most of whom are pensioners.

A number of elderly volunteers are reported to be distressed by the changes, which are to be implemented for insurance reasons.

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Peter Gabriel tunes in to write score for millennium spectacular

By Nonie Niesewand



Peter Gabriel: 'The project can pump a bit of excitement into the depressed sponge of English negativity' Photograph: Arnold Slater

THE Millennium Dome entertainment spectacular will be a triumph of experience over youth - old staggers over Britpop tyros every time.

Peter Gabriel, the 49-year-old star, is staging a comeback for 2000, this time behind the scenes and away from the mikes and lights and fireworks.

The former Genesis member is writing the score for the 20-minute show that will be staged in the Dome's auditorium six times a day. He is also planning the show's contents with the creative director and rock set designer Mark Fisher, 52.

"No, it's not a musical telling the history of pop music," Gabriel says. "It's a fable that involves nature and man through performance, art, sight and sound, smell and colour. Lots of characters pop up in it. Scientists, behavioural scientists, artists, industrialists... we must tell the story of the post-industrial landscape and the dilemmas that will face us."

To help Gabriel, the French-Canadian theatre director Robert Lepage has been appointed to develop

the special effects. It is not the first time they have worked together. When Lepage designed Gabriel's 1993 tour, "The Secret World", Gabriel burst out of a lit phone booth singing "Come Talk to Me" with a cable like an umbilical chord slowly pulling him back into the booth before the lights went out.

When Lepage staged *Seven Streams of Ota* at the National Theatre in London, the audience was transported from Japan to a tenement in New York without a scene change simply by the ingenious use of light and screen and blackout.

And mud filled the stage at the same theatre when Lepage staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The inspiration for that came from parish records from 1595, the year Shakespeare wrote the play, which revealed that it was the year of mud.

Mud will also feature in Gabriel's CD-Rom game, *Eve*, which will be projected on computer screens. In the game Adam and Eve slip and fall and wrestle their way through what Gabriel calls "this post-industrial landscape" but they have the power to plant trees and bluebell glades in the mud and regain paradise.

A star-studded list of talking heads helps them to reach their goal. For example, Robin Skinner, the psychologist who wrote *Families and How to Survive Them* with John Cleeve, pops up to hand out marital advice. And paintings and sculptures from the late Helen Chadwick and from Kathy de Montraux and Nils Udo can be manipulated and altered on screen. You can also dub and cut your own tunes from the various artists that Gabriel records on his World Music label.

And how will Gabriel deal with the Dome? The theme, he says, will be "M for Millennium and also M for Empowerment. People will come into the dome and experience this assault on their senses and get ideas to realise more of who or what they want to be. I'm the catalyst."

From being a Dome sceptic Gabriel now describes himself as a realistic optimist. "If there is a project that can pump a bit of excitement into the big depressed sponge that is the core of English negativity, then it will be worth doing. A climate that encourages and frees ideas and good thinking." There is a good New Year's resolution.

Gun police exposed by medical shortfall

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

POLICE marksmen are frequently sent to firearms incidents without any medical back-up, a Home Office funded study has found.

The number of times police have been issued with firearms has risen sixfold in the last 10 years to about 12,000, and examination of firearms incidents found that there were gaps in providing immediate medical care in a significant number of cases.

The authors of the study say the first 15 minutes in any trauma are critical and can make all the difference to a casualty's chance of survival.

Firearms officers should be given special medical training or forces should send a doctor out with the marksmen, suggest the two police officers who carried out the unpublished study.

Featured in *Police Review* magazine, PCs Stuart Campbell and Alasdair Wright, both firearms officers with the Cumbria force, said that rural areas were particularly badly affected because of the difficulty of getting an ambulance quickly to a shooting incident.

Their research revealed that most forces inform the ambulance service of a firearms incident but few have any formal arrangements to ensure medics would be at the scene.

"We started to question what an ambulance 'on standby' actually means," said PC Campbell.

"Does it mean it's at the station, around the corner or just available when the request was made - and is now on another job?"

The research found that often there was effectively no cover. Calling for immediate im-

provements, the authors warned that the authorities must not wait until another tragedy such as Hungerford or Dunblane before acting.

"Armed Response Vehicles were introduced after Hungerford: the handgun ban after Dunblane. We don't want another tragedy before we push for immediate care," said PC Wright.

Results from questionnaires to all 43 forces in England and Wales have suggested that about six in every ten firearms incidents are spontaneous and therefore unlikely to have proper medical cover.

The importance of medical care for both police and public casualties was highlighted by the rise in the number of armed operations in England and Wales - a total of 12,379 occasions in 1996-97, compared to 8,476 the previous year and 5,824 two years ago.

The forces where firearms were issued most frequently were the Metropolitan Police, 2,439, Northumbria, 1,360, Cleveland, 1,026, Merseyside, 671, and West Yorkshire, 617.

But despite the increased availability of guns among criminals, the number of incidents at which police actually fired their weapons has remained steady since 1995 at five a year.

At present, there is no national standard for providing medical care in the event of an injury to a member of the public, an officer or a suspect.

PCs Campbell and Wright believe that all firearms officers should receive medical training to a recognised national standard.

They also highlighted an alternative system in Kent where a doctor automatically accompanies the firearms team.

Raising money is monkey business

A STUDENT is preparing to become a zoo attraction in his own right when he lives for a week in a monkey cage.

Andy Marshall, 21, a third-year zoology student at Cardiff University, will spend seven days and nights in an enclosure at Paignton Zoo in south Devon, where he is studying primate behaviour.

Mr Marshall's endeavour, which begins on Monday morning, is aimed at raising £3,000 to pay for his research assistant place on a zoological survey of the coast of Tanzania.

None of the capuchin monkeys he has been working with will be with him in the 150 square foot cage, but he will have plenty of creature comforts to keep him occupied.

Part of his work with the monkeys has been in the field of environment enrichment, to keep them contented in captivity. The same principle will be used to enable Mr Marshall to spend time happily in his cage.

He said: "It is a good way to emphasise the work I am doing. I will have a mobile phone and a radio, as well as magazines, books, a football and a water pistol."

Just like the monkeys, he will be fed by the keepers. And although his meals are due to come from the zoo restaurant, he expects jokers will offer him the monkey diet of fruit and leaves. Along with donations, he will also be asking members of the public to leave chocolate and beer.

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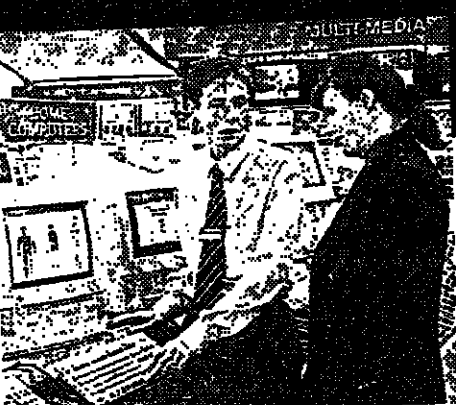
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Teachers may strike over pay shake-up

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

MEMBERS of the biggest teachers union will this weekend threaten strike action against government policies to raise standards in schools.

Leaders of the National Union of Teachers have put down an emergency motion at the union's annual conference in Blackpool calling for action, including strikes, if new education action zones, test beds for experiments in the inner cities, threaten teachers' pay and conditions.

Ministers have said they want at least some of 25 zones to be set up from September to tear up national conditions of pay and service. Some conference delegates want to go further than their leaders and boycott the zones altogether.

Left-wing delegates have also tabled a series of motions proposing strikes over government policies on oversized classes, new ways of sacking teachers and the closure of failing schools. The conference promises to be as stormy as ever, with the union's moderate leadership opposing many calls for industrial action.

Yesterday Doug McAvoy, the union's secretary, warned delegates not to indulge in "political posturing". They should, he said, realise that there was a credit as well as a debit side to government policies. "Any delegate who ignores the Government's spending commitments, its commitment to improve buildings, and its commitment to reduce class sizes for five, six and seven-year-olds is deliberately not wanting to live in the real world." The Gov-

ernment had made mistakes, such as naming and shaming failing schools and phasing in the teachers' pay award. "That enables people to argue that there is no difference between this government and the last. But there is a vast difference."

He argued, that, though many motions on the agenda remained the same as in the past, many conference delegates' attitudes had changed. They realised that industrial action was only possible on an important issue which touched a nerve with most teachers. "There are people here from political groups in the union who acknowledge that privately but who would never dare to acknowledge it from the platform."

He dismissed as "political posturing" an attack on the leadership's decision to sign up to new government procedures to enable teachers to be sacked more quickly. Today delegates will debate a motion calling for strike action over the procedures.

Another motion due to be discussed today will call for industrial action over teachers who are bullied by heads, if school governors fail to protect them. Teachers are still angry with Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector of schools, who heads the Office for Standards and Education (Ofsted).

Delegates will consider refusing to comply with inspections if teachers believe inspectors are being confrontational or unprofessional.

They will also hear calls for strikes over members threatened with redundancy or dismissal after schools have been declared failing by inspectors.

One in three pupils bullied

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

A THIRD of secondary school pupils have suffered from bullying, according to a survey published today. But the vast majority of the 4,000 11- to 16-year-olds surveyed by MORF felt their teachers were aware of problems and could do something about them.

Union leaders said it added weight to their claims that teachers spent too long on paperwork, leaving less time to deal with children's needs.

Peter Smith, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, which commissioned the poll, said it was the first real indication of the strength of feeling among children. He said: "Bullying is a serious problem in schools and there is a great deal of concern about it from children and parents."

The survey, carried out in 350 state schools across England and Wales, asked children whether teachers were aware of the fact that bullying was going on in their school. A third of children replied that their teachers were very aware, and another third said staff were fairly aware. Nine per cent said

they were bullied often, and 27 per cent said they had sometimes been victims of bullying.

Asked about drugs in schools, nearly 60 per cent of pupils said staff were very or fairly aware of the problems.

Mr Smith said the survey had also revealed a "laddish culture" in classrooms, with boys declaring that they were "too cool for school". He called for primary schools to recruit more male teachers as role models, and said there was a need for more research into pupil attitudes.

Forty eight per cent of children thought girls did better, with just four per cent answering that boys had the upper hand. Of those who thought girls did better, 69 per cent thought they worked harder, 64 per cent said boys did not concentrate, 62 per cent said girls were more mature and 58 per cent said boys thought schoolwork was bad for their image.

Mr Smith said interviews had supported traditional views of boys' and girls' attitudes to schooling. "The message is that girls are more conscientious. They work harder and there's a great deal of macho mucking about among boys. In Cool Britannia, boys working hard at school is not cool."

Body identified as missing Kirsty

A BODY discovered at a nature reserve has been formally identified as that of missing police computer operator Kirsty Carver.

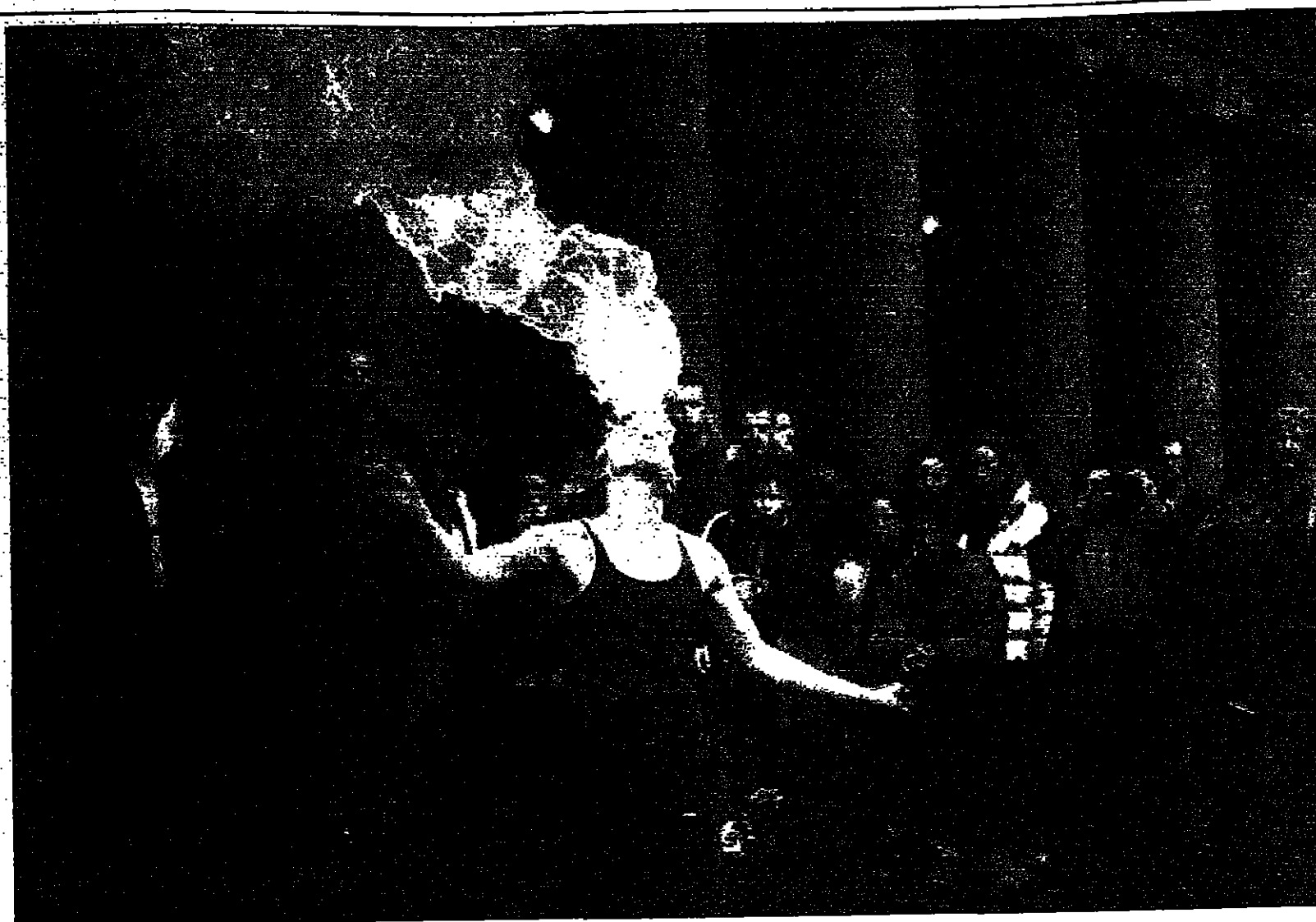
Jewellery and personal items were used to identify the body. Inspector Steve Love of Humberside police said: "The visual identification by relatives was not possible due to the passage of time since her death which appears to have been about the time of her disappearance."

Craig Belcher, a petrol station attendant, has been

charged with the murder of Ms Carver, 22.

Humberside police said Mr Belcher, 23, of Hesse, Hull, would appear before magistrates today. He was charged after three days of questioning by police.

Police discovered a woman's body 37 days after Ms Carver went missing from her home on 5 March in Hesse. She was found in undergrowth at Spurn Point, a nature reserve on the Humber estuary. A post mortem examination showed she died from head injuries.



Hot stuff: Danial Crute performing at an open audition in Covent Garden yesterday to find the best street performer in London. The winners will be asked to perform at the 18 Awards, an arts awards night at Alexandra Palace, north London, in two weeks' time. Photograph: David Rose



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Magical tumble of blue ice blocks stairway to the summit



STEPHEN GOODWIN

Everest Diary

Base Camp

IT IS NOON and we are sitting in the expedition mess-tent drinking tea with Dawa and Glychen, a couple of Sherpas working for the Singaporean expedition. They are old friends of some of our team, and looking as cool and relaxed as if they were having a day off.

In fact before New Yorker David Calloway and I had finished breakfast, the pair had completed a three-hour round trip through the Khumbu Icefall, a height gain of some 700 metres to Camp 1 at its head, crossing gaping crevasses on aluminium ladders lashed together, and always with the chance of one of the teetering ice-cliffs crashing on to their route. The Icefall has made many Sherpa widows. As load carriers, they make many more journeys through this barrier to Everest than the climbers who hire them, increasing the odds of an accident.

Our own Himalayan Kingdom's team will take a tentative look at the Icefall ladders tomorrow, and all being well, go the whole way up to Camp 1 next week. But the three-hour round trip, carrying a 24kg load on the way up, heavier than you are supposed to take as baggage on an international flight, was impressive. Newcomers like myself are expected to take up to six hours just for the one-way climb up, and with the lightest of packs.

Take away the idea of climbing the Icefall and the tumble of glistening blue ice looks magical. But it is constantly on the move, the frozen waterfall between the glacier above in the Western Cwm and its continuation literally beneath us here in Base Camp. Each of the



Top of the world: Before they can contemplate Summit Ridge, Goodwin and his companions must cross the treacherous Khumbu Icefall
Photograph: Robert Schauer

in basic ice-climbing at Base Camp. But unless they have been on this type of Himalayan expedition before, few climbers will have had experience of moving up and down fixed ropes, still less crossing ladders while wearing crampons. I'm not too proud to practise before I'm doing it over a bottomless crevasse.

Healthwise, the bugs that struck in the lodges on the walk-in through the Khumbu seem to have been beaten off, and, despite the 5,400m height, no headaches were reported at breakfast. Our acclimatisation though is not yet complete and I can imagine that without the diary to write, a touch of Base Camp Fever might set in.

Writing the diary though is the easy bit. Our satellite phone has packed up, following a trend set by satellite phones with two other expeditions, and I am reduced to trailing over the piles of glacial rubble time after time to beg the use of a phone with a well-equipped American group. There are few, if any, other phones available and the price of a call is £10 a minute, so a replacement cannot come soon enough. The alternative, of course, is to go back to the days of using runners to get news back to the outside world. It has its attractions. Now why didn't I bring those cleft sticks.

house-sized cliffs leaning out at ever more precarious angles will fall before long. As the late Douglas Haston wrote: "One can only go in and hope... When one finally comes out of this icy mess into the Western Cwm, it is like being in a newer, brighter land."

Looking back from the foot of the Icefall, there is the whole of Base Camp spread out over an area maybe as big as Green Park, but a

bit more awkward to traverse. My own tent is perched on a bouldery hummock a couple of minutes walk from the mess tent and kitchen. Beneath the stones is the ice of the glacier and occasionally in the night there is a "crack" as it yields to the pressure to move down stream. Two flimsy structures house the toilet and a shower - having a shower depends on there being enough sun to heat a plastic bag of water to suspend over one's head. And at the moment it is snowing.

Our first three days here have been spent, like other expeditions, establishing the operation necessities for a long stay and climbing Everest. More than 40 barrels of gear and food were brought up by yaks and their lower-level cousins, dzobos, and some have still to be unpacked. Yesterday, we erected the radio mast that will keep Base

Camp in touch with climbers on the mountain. And on an individual level, team members have been adjusting crampons to fit the bulky insulated boots needed to keep out the cold at high altitude.

We went to the foot of the Icefall to try out gear strange to some of us on the short ice-cliffs. There has been a fair bit of mockery in the climbing press in recent years about commercial groups being instructed

to go back to the days of using runners to get news back to the outside world. It has its attractions. Now why didn't I bring those cleft sticks.

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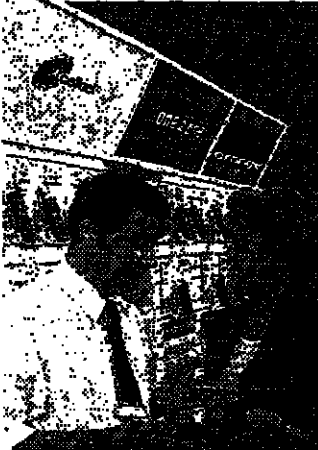
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The Link

Taxpayers foot bill of £5.3m for MPs' catering

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

THE COST of food and drink for MPs and staff in the House of Commons has gone up by more than £1m in the year since the general election, figures have shown. The taxpayer paid £5.3m for the bars and restaurants in the House last year, compared with £4.2m in the last year of the Conservative administration.

Next year's total bill for feeding and watering the nation's elected representatives, their staff and guests is expected to come to £5.8m, according to official estimates. Just £800,000 of that will be paid in bar and restaurant bills.

Food and drink in Westminster has always been subsidised. Although staff costs are high because of anti-social hours and the need for taxis home after late sittings - £5.5m has been set aside this year - MPs are still able to eat and drink very cheaply.

A shot of 12-year-old malt whisky in the Strangers' bar, frequented by MPs and guests, costs £1.00. In the Red Lion on Parliament Street, a couple of hundred yards away, the same drink costs £2.25. Carlsberg lager costs £1.50 in the Commons and £2.25 in the Red Lion. The cheapest bitter in the house, Federation Ale, costs £1.25, while the pub's Red Lion bitter costs £1.65. Guinness is £1.70 in Parliament but £2.35 in the nearby hotel.

The 660 MPs and 2,000 other staff at the Commons also eat well for little compared with what they would pay in a nearby restaurant. On a typical day recently the members' dining room served three-course meals for £7.50. Those who wanted to go à la carte could splash out and spend up to £11.80. The nearest restaurant, The Atrium, charges £20 to £30 for a three-course meal without wine.

For £7.40, an MP could start

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- Steak and Mushroom Pie
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- Poached Pears with Cinnamon Ice Cream
- Blackcurrant Delice
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- Fresh Fruit Salad
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Soup: £1.10
Main Courses: £4.00
Desserts: £1.70

with grilled squid, pak choi and pickled ginger, follow up with rolled smoked salmon and sole fillets with young vegetables and finish with poached pears and cinnamon ice cream.

An extra £4.80 would buy Cornish crab soup with herb ravioli, roasted monkfish in a coriander marinade with deep-fried aubergine and red pepper relish and lemon and poppyseed paraff with plum compote and

'Dining rooms were used to advance careers of members'

been told the food was cheap because it was supported by receipts from the House of Commons gift shop. He made inquiries before the election which revealed that the four private dining rooms in the House were booked four times as often by Conservatives as by Labour members. "Those dining rooms were used largely for corporate hospitality or to advance the careers of members. If you wanted to bring in pensioners from your constituency you could never get a booking," he said. The Liberal Democrat MP Archie Kirkwood represents the House of Commons Commission, which oversees spending on the House. The total cost of running the Commons came to £77.6m last year. He said that although he had not yet seen detailed figures on catering, he believed the prices had gone up somewhat recently. However, the subsidies were necessary because MPs needed to stay near by to vote in the evenings. "If you didn't have that you would need to increase the London living allowance for MPs. They are required to stay on the premises almost as an occupational hazard." All the figures were checked by the National Audit Office, he said.

Hundreds of prisoners 'innocent'

SOME 1,300 prison inmates are innocent, a former senior prison service official claimed yesterday. Prisoners contesting their convictions should be "presumed innocent" and given special privileges. David Wilson said.

His growing belief that at least one in 50 inmates is probably not guilty of the crimes began after Stefan Kiszko was

fired in 1992 after 16 years in jail for the murder of schoolgirl Lesley Molseed.

Kiszko, who died a year after release, was an inmate at Grendon Underwood jail in Buckinghamshire while Mr Wilson was a governor there.

He was just one of many long-term inmates destined to stay in prison because they refused to admit their guilt and

"address their offending behaviour" - a prerequisite for being granted parole.

"Of course he refused - it was absurd," Mr Wilson said. Mr Wilson, now an academic at the University of Central England, used a technique called "triangulation" to come up with the conclusion that 2 per cent of the country's 65,000 inmates were innocent.

هناك من الأمل

Pilgrims get the stamp of approval for their progress



Journey's end: Cathedral visitors at the 12th century Door of Glory in Santiago de Compostela. Photograph: Brian Harris

THE great cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, destination of the most important Christian pilgrimage in Europe, is a jaunty building, unlike many of Spain's dour ecclesiastical monuments. Last week, on Palm Sunday, with the doors flung open on all four sides, there was an air of light-hearted satisfaction when the rain momentarily let up and sun sloshed in.

The faithful here exhibit none of the extravagant fanaticism you associate with Spanish Holy Week. Families stood quietly in the beautiful cathedral square holding branches of palm, laurel, olive, or sprigs of rosemary plucked from their gardens, trying to keep their exquisitely kitted-out children in check. Galicians from this part of Spain's north-west corner are renowned for their even temperament and modest ways.

Then I spotted the pilgrim, walking with discomfort, bent under his rucksack, draped with waterproof layers. He fumbled

GALICIAN DIARY



Elizabeth Nash

with a rolled document and his spray of greenery and his pilgrim's staff clattered on the granite flags. As he stooped to retrieve it, the cockleshell of Saint James, tied to his pack with string, swung and pirouetted against him.

Had he come far? He smiled: "No, just 220km. I've only been walking a week. It's difficult for me to get the time off. But this is my third pilgrimage. You talk to people on the road and they keep you going. Once you start you get hooked." He unrolled

his "compostela", the certificate proving he had walked the stipulated minimum of 100km. "I'll frame it alongside the others, and I'll be back in 2001 when I'm retired. My granddaughter will be 15 and I'll bring her with me."

Legend has it that St James the Apostle was buried here, I ventured neutrally. His eyes sparkled. "I don't believe Santiago ever came to Spain. But I always climb up behind the altar to embrace the silver statue of the apostle, just to say I'm here. The archbishop who set up this whole business was the greatest entrepreneur in the history of Christendom!"

You'd never hear such a confession in Seville.

THE film *The Full Monty* - showing in Santiago and at a cinema across Spain - has become the stock catchphrase tossed to any passing Brit, joining a pantheon that includes Mrs Thatcher, "Lady Di" and Bobby Robson. The strippers of Sheffield have

achieved such heroic status that Spanish workers have adopted them as a role model.

Some 50 policemen in the Galician port of Vigo assembled in the foyer of the town hall the other day and, to the astonishment of passers-by, stripped off their uniform down to their caps and boxer shorts in a protest against poor working conditions. They have been campaigning for months for waterproof uniforms and new vehicles and walkie-talkies.

Firemen in Catalonia adopted a similar tactic a few weeks back, filing into a management meeting clad only in underpants and helmets, bearing a banner proclaiming "Without better fire protection, you too are naked and defenceless."

In Vigo town hall, the squirming of the assembled suits, caught by television cameras, was bliss to behold, and the stunned city fathers announced they would address the police men's complaints forthwith.

Dozens die as 300mph tornadoes strike US

By David Usborne
in New York

THE American Deep South was continuing to count its dead yesterday after being hit by a series of tornadoes with wind speeds of up to 300 mph - powerful enough to detach entire houses from their basements.

In northern Alabama, the area worst affected, the death toll had risen to at least 42 and was expected to climb higher. More than 100 people were in hospital being treated for injuries, many of them in critical condition. The storms struck late on Wednesday.

The fiercest of the tornadoes touched down north-west of Birmingham, Alabama.

Designated an F-5 tornado by the National Weather Service, the twister cut a mile-wide path of devastation that was 15 miles long. Miraculously, it lifted from

the ground just two miles from the centre of Birmingham.

F-5 tornadoes - the strongest possible category, with wind speeds between 265mph and 315mph - are extremely rare. Rescue officials in Alabama, where federal emergencies were in force yesterday, said they had never seen damage like it.

Homes, schools, shops and churches had been turned to matchsticks and rubble. "Some places were not survivable," remarked Brian Peters, a National Weather Service meteorologist. Residents and rescue workers said the area outside Birmingham looked as though it had been hit by a bomb.

A few deaths were also reported in Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi. This year is proving one of the worst in recent years for tornadoes in the United States and is set to become the deadliest since 1984, when 122 died.

Pope hears Easter confessions

THE POPE heard the private confessions of 15 pilgrims picked at random as he led Catholics in Good Friday ceremonies. The 10 Italians, a Polish woman, a woman from Burkino Faso, a Spanish couple and two American students were shepherded towards a wooden confessional in the basilica to make their confession to the Pope.

— Reuters, Rome

Pol Pot faces tribunal

THE United States has asked China for help in finding a suitable tribunal for Pol Pot, the former Cambodian leader who presided over the murders of as many as 2 million people, a senior US diplomat said yesterday.

Thomas Pickering, the US Under Secretary of State, said Chinese officials "listened with interest" but did not immediately respond to the request raised in meetings since his arrival on Thursday in Peking. President Bill Clinton has reportedly ordered the departments of Defense, State and Justice to prepare strategies to arrest Pol Pot.

— AP, Peking

Peace-keepers for Balkans

GREECE told its Balkan neighbours yesterday it would join discussions on creating a regional peace-keeping force.

At a meeting with his Romanian and Bulgarian counterparts, the Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, said Greek defence ministry officials would attend a meeting in Bucharest towards the end of the month. Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania have been discussing the creation of a joint Balkan peace-keeping force to step in when crises bubble over in the troubled region.

— Reuters, Sarajevo

Grim task in Mecca

FAMILY, friends and diplomats combed hospitals and mortuaries in Mecca, Saudi Arabia yesterday to identify 118 Muslim pilgrims killed in a stampede on the last day of the annual haj.

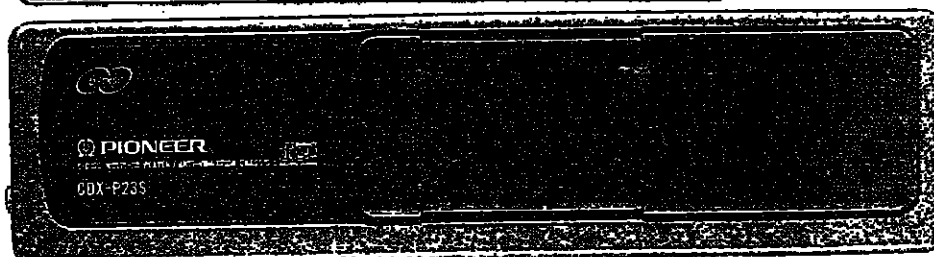
The stampede took place on a bridge near Mens, outside Mecca, where a huge crowd of pilgrims prepared for the symbolic stoning of the devil.

— Reuters, Mecca

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Divided Korea: First the superpowers now dogma prevent any contact between North and South

War and politics keep families apart for half a century

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Seoul

FIFTY-one years ago, Cho Dong Young left his home in the town of Sinjuju to study at university in the Korean capital, Seoul. It was 1947, the northern half of Korea was in an edgy state, and he was glad to get away. "I felt a lot of dislike for the communists, and I didn't like the fact that the Americans and Russians had divided Korea along the 38th parallel," says Mr Cho. "I guessed that unification was going to be difficult, since neither of the superpowers really seemed to want it. But I thought that I would be able to go back any time I wanted to."

Mr. Cho left his parents and five brothers and sisters behind and the expectation was that they would be reunited in a couple of years at the most. But, 51 years later, Mr. Cho is still trying to make the 210-mile journey between Seoul and Sinuiju. Apart from a brother, who escaped to the South a few years later, he has never seen any of his family, never received a letter or a telephone call. He assumes that both his parents are dead, and his youngest sister must now be 64. If she survived the Korean War and the famine presently believed to be ravaging the North, Mr. Cho is 76, and he knows that time is running out.

In the 53 years since the end of the Second World War, the division of Korea has become such an established fact of international relations that it is easy to forget how cruel and arbitrary it is. Ethnically, culturally and linguistically, Koreans are one people and until the end of the war their country had been unified for a thousand years.

In 1945, in what should have been a joyous moment of liberation from the Japanese, they found themselves divided first along the 38th parallel and, after the 1950-53 Korean War, along an irregular line close to it.

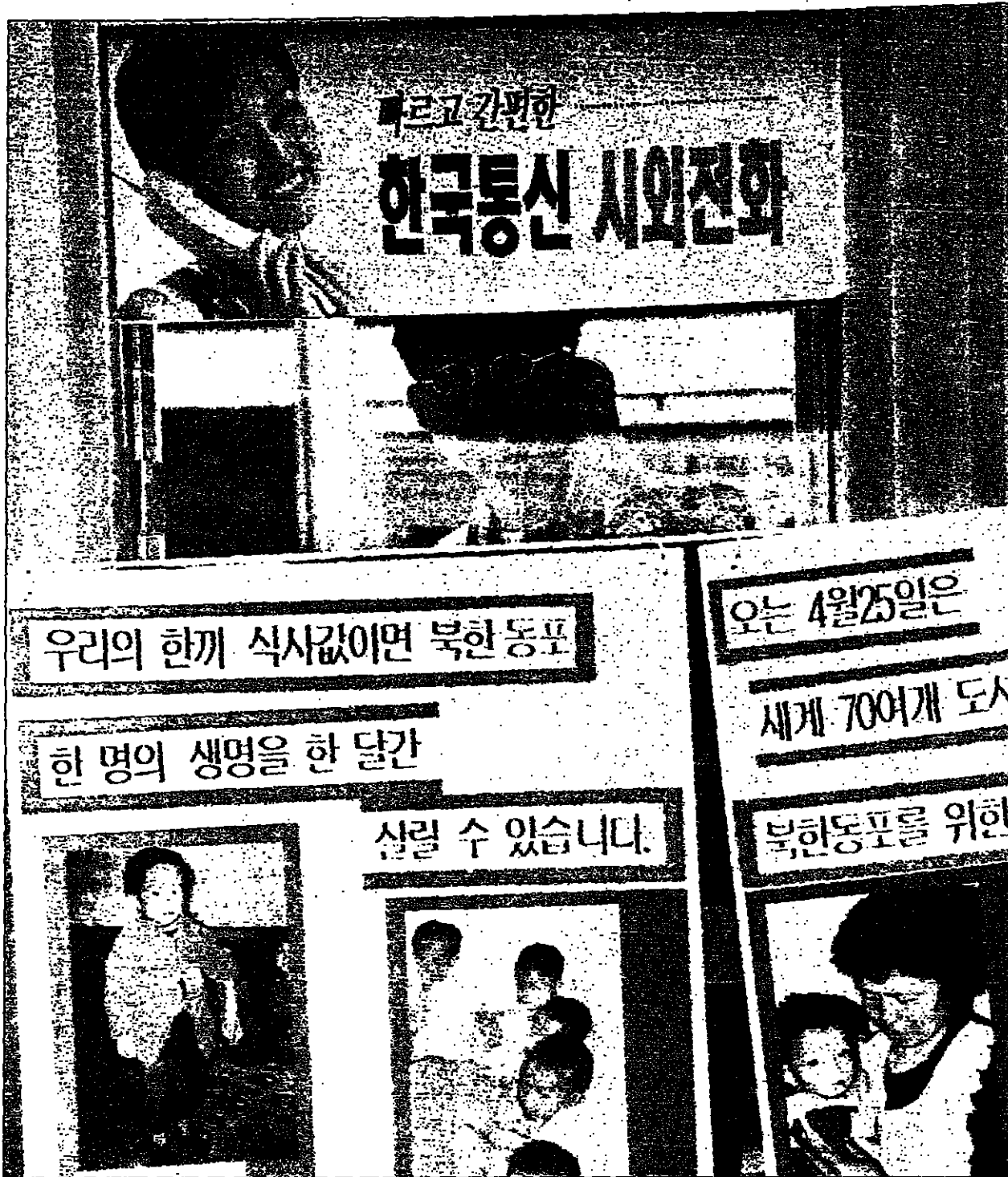
In the chaos before the Korean War, some 10 million people – about 5 million from each side – found themselves separated from their families, a hangover of the Second World War. “Other countries were divided, but our case is unique,” says Mr Cho, who now heads the Korean Assembly for Reunion of Ten Million Separated Families. “Germany was divided, but there were still exchanges between families. Korea is the last country on earth where even letters cannot be sent between the two parts.”

At the root of the problem is the intense, fratricidal bitterness between the governments of the North and South, one run by doctrinaire communists, the other by American-backed cap-

italists and both of them in the last few years victims of stingy economic problems. Successive Korean leaders have promised to sort out the problem. The latest of them was Kim Dae Jung, the former dissident and now president of South Korea, who has referred repeatedly to the problem. "Numerous members of separated families have grown old and are passing away," he said during his inaugural address. "We must let those ones separated from their families in the North and South meet and communicate with one another as soon as possible."

The separation of families is especially painful in a Confucian culture like Korea's in which reverence for ancestors and the tending of family graves are the solemn duty of the living.

In 1989, Mr Cho travelled to China, to the town of Dandong which faces Sinuiju across the Yalu River. He took a boat, and got within a few yards of his old home. He waved at the people on the river side and some of them waved back, but they didn't answer his shouts. "It's during the holidays, when people spend time with their families, or tend the graves of their parents - that's when I feel the pain the most. And that time in the river, 10 yards away from my home town - no one else could feel how I felt then."



Posters call for aid to famine stricken North Koreans on a telephone booth in Seoul

Photograph: Ahn Young-joon/A

Ministers in talks to bring relatives together

SOUTH KOREA said yesterday it was going into bilateral talks with North Korea which would include discussions on the reuniting of families separated since the 1950-1953 Korean War. The delegations will also discuss the urgent issue of fertiliser aid for the famine-stricken North.

The meeting, the first high-level government talks since the death of the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in 1994, was scheduled to take place in Peking yesterday.

"At the Peking meeting, the two sides will take up the issue of fertiliser, but that will not overshadow the humanitarian concerns over the reunion of separated families," the South Korean presidential spokesman Park Jie-won said.

Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, has said he wanted to increase economic exchanges with North Korea, but he has also insisted that family reunions cannot be delayed.

Pyongyang proposed the vice-minister-level talks, mainly to discuss fertiliser aid. South Korea's agenda includes an exchange of special envoys and a summit, as well as family reunions. Analysts said South Korea would use disbursement of the fertiliser to win concessions from the North in other areas.

— Reuters, Seoul

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Karadzic arrest 'in days'

By Rupert Cornwell

THE question is no longer if but where, when and how Radovan Karadzic, former leader of the Bosnian Serbs but now a fugitive war criminal, hands himself over to face trial by an international tribunal which has indicted him on two counts of genocide.

Yesterday Western diplomats sounded more confident than ever that Mr Karadzic could give himself up to the United Nations court in The Hague within weeks, or even days. His exact whereabouts are a mystery. Accounts place him variously in Serbia, Belarus, Russia or still inside Bosnia.

But officials say he has been

in contact with Biljana Plavšić and Milorad Dodik, the president and prime minister of the Bosnian Serb Republic set up by the 1995 Dayton accords which ended the Bosnian war, to explore the terms of a surrender. Chief of his conditions is understood to be a guarantee that in the event of being convicted and jailed, he would serve the sentence in an Orthodox Christian country.

The arrest of Mr Karadzic would be a big boost to the steadily growing authority of the court, which has already taken into custody 25 of the 74 people indicted for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. It would also increase pressure on General Ratko Mladic, the former

Bosnian Serb military commander who shares equal billing with Mr Karadzic on the UN wanted list.

General Mladic is said to be living under military protection in Belgrade or Bosnia. But he will have observed the crumbling of protection for Mr Karadzic, as the more moderate Bosnian Serb leadership under Mrs Plavsic has consolidated its position. That vulnerability was underlined last week when a Nato force "by coincidence" stumbled into Mr Karadzic's erstwhile headquarters of Pale. Reading the omens, the former leader went into hiding. But Elisabeth Rehn, the UN envoy to Bosnia, predicts he will be in The Hague, "quite soon".

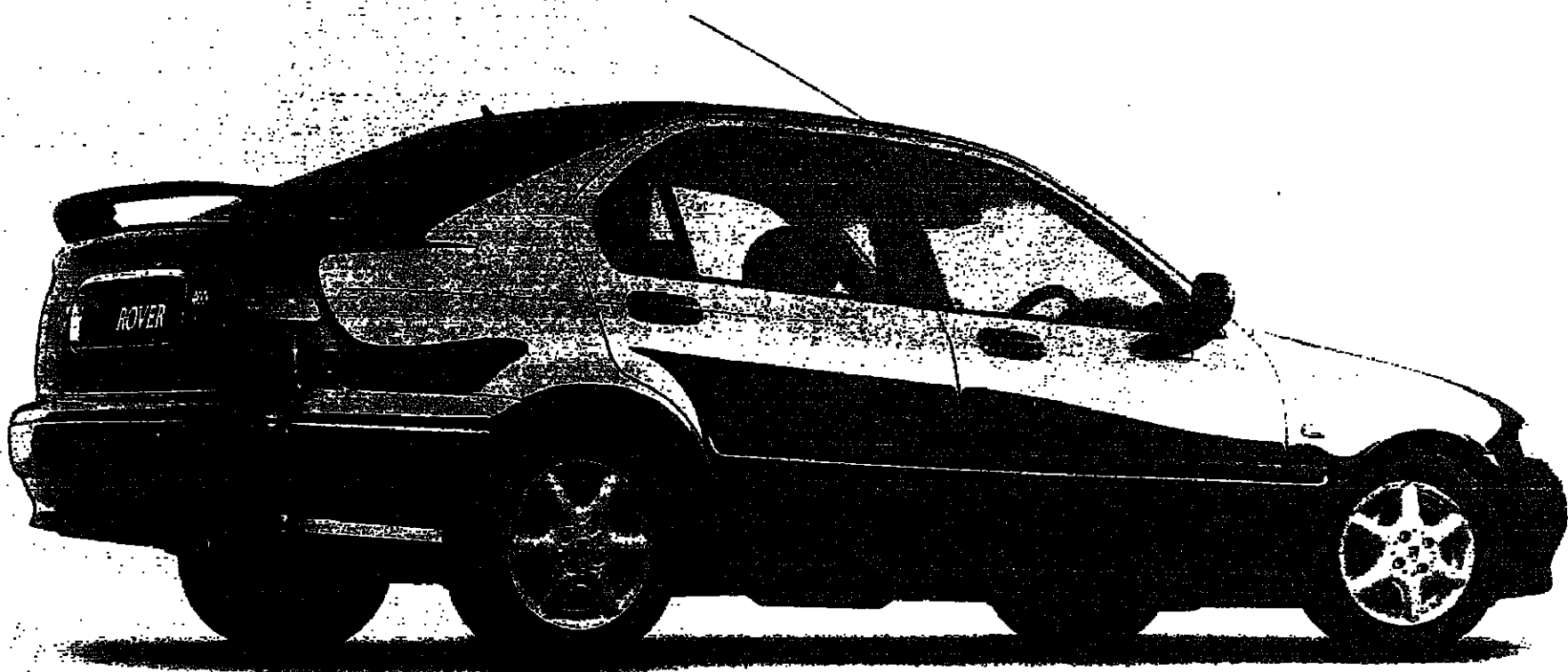
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Palestinian identity forged in the wilderness

In the second part of our series on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, Patrick Cockburn looks at the changing tactics in the Arab struggle and, below, Robert Fisk reports on the losers of 1948

FOR 50 years the Palestinians have practised the politics of weakness. "There was no such thing as the Palestinian people," said Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, 30 years ago. "When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country from them. They did not exist."

The very fervour of Mrs Meir's denial may point to a hidden unease or guilt about the fate of the Palestinians, as if the tragedy of their flight in 1948 would be the less because they never had a state of their own. The fact that they left is not in dispute: some 700,000 Palestinians living in what became Israel lost their homes and became refugees. Another 150,000 were able to stay, mainly in Galilee.

It is a measure of the failure of the Palestinians to make their case successfully that even after what they termed *al-Nakba* - the Catastrophe - their existence as a people should be doubted or they should have to justify their flight in the middle of war. The most important



fact was that Israel did not allow them to return and took over their property. Arguments about exactly what happened in 1948 retain their political potency half a century after the event. For instance, 50,000 Palestinians were expelled from Lydda (now Lod) and Ramla, south-east of Tel Aviv. The Israeli position was that they left voluntarily. When Yitzhak Rabin came to write his memoirs he recalled: "The population of Lod did not leave willingly. There was no way of avoiding the use of fire and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march."

Thirty years later this was still too much for the cabinet committee which vetted ministerial memoirs for security breaches. They admitted what Rabin had written was true, but said it could not be published "because it will ruin our claim that we acted humanely". Rabin was angry, but agreed to the

censorship. What he had really written about the expulsion of the Palestinians from Lod was only revealed because his English translator already had a copy of the uncensored manuscript and passed on the deleted passage to the *New York Times*.

Palestinian nationalism was not created by 1948, but it was transformed by it. Palestinians had entered, said Fawaz Turki, a Palestinian writer, the "world of the exile. The world of the refugee. The world of the ghettos. The world of the stateless." Palestinians fled in the first instance to the West Bank and Gaza, but they also began to create a Palestinian diaspora in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Gulf states and beyond.

If the Palestinian ability to resist was destroyed by defeat and flight in Israel's war of independence it was, in a sense, reborn in the defeat of the Arabs in 1967. Yasser Arafat, by then becoming the unchallenged Palestinian leader, reputedly met George Habash, leading a more radical faction, in a cafe in Damascus. Habash said: "Everything is lost." Arafat replied: "George, you are wrong. It is not the end. It is the beginning." The defeat of the



Generations of struggle: A masked Palestinian activist burns an Israeli flag during a campaign for votes ahead of student council elections in April last year at Hebron university. Palestinian nationalism was not created by 1948, but it was transformed by it. Photograph: Hashimouni/News/Reuters

Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian armies discredited Arab regimes. It gave greater leeway for the Palestinians to act on their own. With the rise of Arafat, his movement Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, they possessed a

more effective leadership than ever before. Israel, through its conquest of the West Bank and Gaza, was once again ruling large numbers of Palestinians, though the political consequences of this took 20 years to develop.

The problem for the PLO was that its growing strength as an organisation in exile, drawing its support from Palestinian refugees, inevitably brought it into conflict with whatever country it was based in. Its presence attracted Israeli retaliation. It happened first in Jordan where 3,000 Palestinians were killed in fighting with the Jordanian army. In Lebanon its sojourn was much longer, but the final result the same. In 1982 Israel invaded, drove the PLO out of Beirut and presided over the massacre of some 850 Palestinians by Christian militiamen at Sabra and Chatila refugee camps.

The PLO grew stronger, but so did Israel. The Palestinian campaign of terror - from the massacre of Israeli athletes at Munich to the hijacking of planes - attracted the attention of the world, but also delegitimised Palestinians as "terrorists". Arafat had strengths as a

leader. He tried to maintain a Palestinian consensus. But he has a fondness for cronies in command, his military organisation is weak and is invariably poor at presenting the Palestinian case.

The PLO also benefited and suffered from the Israeli belief that it was the organisation that was the source of all its troubles. In fact no Palestinian or Israeli leader expected the West Bank and Gaza to explode in 1987. Israel could only cling on by intense repression during the intifada. It brought Palestinians recognition and sympathy as never before. Ultimately it also brought them the Oslo accords in 1993, under which Israel recognised the PLO and something likely, in time, to resemble a Palestinian state.

But it was an agreement full of flaws. The most immediate effect as its implementation began was a fall in the

Palestinian standard of living by 30 per cent as Israel scaled off the newly autonomous enclaves. Not surprisingly, many Palestinians thought the agreement was geared to solving Israel's problems and not their own by creating Palestinian "bantustans" along the lines of the homelands created by the apartheid regime in South Africa. The six years in which Oslo was to be implemented gave Hamas, the Islamic militant organisation, and the Israeli settlers on the West Bank time to derail it.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister since 1996, made clear that he was only going to grant strictly regulated autonomy in part of the West Bank. He would "lower Palestinian expectations". Going by the history of the last 50 years he will not succeed, because the Palestinian will for self-determination is too strong to contain.

Mourning never ceases for the land they lost

By Robert Fisk
in Chatila Camp, Beirut

THE white rose petals lay scattered over the mass grave of Sabra and Chatila yesterday, their plastic wrappings churned into the mud. The ceremony 12 hours earlier had been a short one, a march by both Palestinians and Lebanese, candles in their hands, to mark the Israeli massacre of Palestinians at Deir Yassin exactly 50 years ago. Their commemoration at the site of the slaughter of yet more Palestinians - by Israel's Lebanese allies in 1982 - showed all too painfully what this year's anniversary means to the losers in the war for Israel's creation.

For losers is what the Palestinians of Lebanon are. They fled for their lives in 1948 from that part of Palestine that was to become Israel, taking with them the deeds to their homes, their tax receipts from the old British mandate, even the keys to the front doors they thought they would re-open a few days later. Even today, in the squalor of Lebanon's 12 fetid refugee camps, they live in their own ghost villages: the survivors of the 1948 exodus, their children and grandchildren, are still grouped in streets named after the towns they left in Palestine. In Chatila, one slum alley contains the people from north Acre. In Rashadiyeh camp, you can find the descendants of Um al-Faraj.

But Um al-Faraj was destroyed five decades ago - it is today called Ben Ami - and the villages these people left are, most of them, buried beneath long grass or rubble built over by Jewish settlements. The Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi has identified 418 destroyed or depopulated Palestinian villages in present-day Israel; and no peace treaty will ever allow the Palestinians of Lebanon to return to these homes. Even the now-dead Oslo agreement relegated them to the status of "refugees", in the "final status" talks that will almost certainly never take place.

At its bleakest - and there is

no other status for the Palestinians here - their case is hopeless. The West Bank and Gaza were never their homes. But nor can Lebanon be their homeland. Despised by a population whose Christian community often and unfairly blame them for Lebanon's 16-year civil war, the 362,098 UN-registered Palestinians dream of a Return - they use the word - which can never take place. They cannot work or hold residence cards in Lebanon: if they leave, they have no automatic right to come back. Yasser Arafat - once he realised that Oslo would not provide for them - cut off all their PLO funds.

Even the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, can do little to help. Suffering from a budget deficit of \$85m, the organisation cannot

'It was a 50th anniversary even the dead might have wished to forget'

not stop the deterioration of refugee schools and hospitals. Since the PLO abandoned Beirut after encirclement by the Israeli army in 1982, Arafat has cared little or nothing for the Palestinians whose sons and daughters died in their thousands for his "revolution" in Lebanon. When Israel's Phalangist allies massacred up to 2,000 Palestinians at Sabra and Chatila, after the Israeli army had surrounded the camps, Arafat was already on his way to safety in Tunis. Israel's own inquiry recorded how Israeli troops saw civilians being taken away for slaughter - and did nothing.

No wonder the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon are watching the final burial of the Oslo agreement with cynicism as well as despair. No wonder Arafat's face has been etched from almost every Palestinian wall. In

its place are stuck portraits of young men who tried vainly to reach the Israeli border - once the border of Palestine - to attack the country which prevented their parents from returning home. Pictures of Hamas "martyrs" - including the bomber Yahya Ayyash assassinated by the Israelis in Gaza - are plastered along the narrow streets, for Islam is taking the place of nationalism in many homes. There is no sympathy for the innocent Israeli victims of Hamas suicide bombs.

No wonder, too, that Palestinians remembered, after Sabra and Chatila, the 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin. Menachem Begin's Irgun members were responsible for the slaughter outside Jerusalem although the victims - 245 men, women and children, some of them disembowelled - were far fewer than the Palestinian death toll in later killing fields. Some of those who fled the Israelis in 1948 ended up under the knives of Israel's Lebanese allies 34 years later. Others have lived to pay brief, nervous visits to relatives who did not run away and who are now Israeli Arab citizens. One woman who escaped the Chatila massacre was married to a Palestinian Muslim from what is now northern Israel, but she refused ever to return to what was once their home. She is Jewish, and still lives in Lebanon with her Palestinian family.

Just a few days ago, the Lebanese announced the eviction of up to a thousand Palestinians from the Bourj el-Barajneh camp in Beirut to make way for a new airport highway. There is no talk of compensation or new homes. They will have to huddle in the overcrowded huts of relatives or friends. So far as the Lebanese are concerned, they can go home. But "home" is a Palestine that no longer exists. So of course there were tears on Thursday night when the white roses were thrown - Diana-like - over the mass grave at Sabra and Chatila. It was a 50th anniversary even the dead might have wished to forget.

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Master of modern ballet is saved from life as a tramp in New York

By David Osborne
in New York

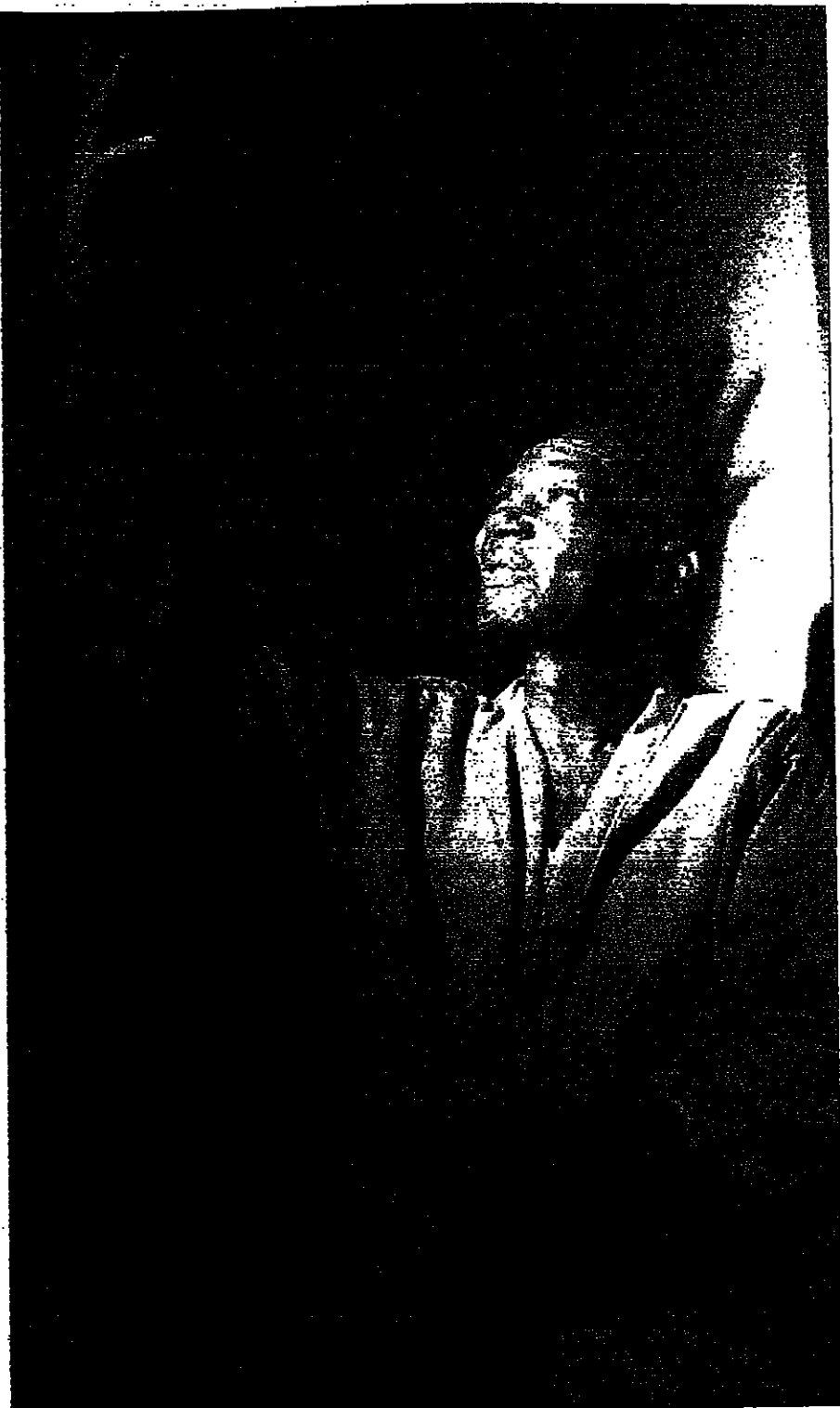
WHEN an ambulance stopped to scoop him up from the street one cold evening last month, Arthur Bell was just another of New York's homeless wanderers. Barely able to stand, he found himself deposited in a local hospital. From there, he would soon have been sent to a shelter. But for his burlings.

The 71-year-old black man with frostbite on his feet was telling anyone who would listen about a long-ago life in London and Paris and about some improbable acquaintances in the world of ballet, including such late greats as Sir Frederick Ashton and Margot Fonteyn. Senile dementia, the nurses assumed.

"And they went, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah'," recalled Maria Mackin, the social worker assigned to the case. But Ms Mackin, who herself used to photograph dancers for a ballet shoe company, began to listen more carefully. She checked out his stories at the New York Library for Performing Arts.

"I was absolutely thrilled," Ms Mackin said. "I thought, oh my God, this is incredible, if this is true. And I really believed it was true and that the world had let this man slip through the cracks."

And indeed, this old man, who this weekend remains in a nursing home in Queens, has been over-modest. One of nine children of a Florida preacher, Mr Bell was not only a dancer, but one of the first black dancers to break the race barrier in ballet after the Second



Arthur Bell holds a pose from Ashton's *Illuminations*. Despite having lived on the street he still retains the slender grace of a dancer
Photograph: Fred R. Conrad/AP

World War. His proudest moment came in Manhattan in 1950, when Ashton chose him as a guest soloist in the world premiere of *Illuminations*, based on a collection of French poems by Arthur Rimbaud. Bell is still able to remember every note of the music composed by Benjamin Britten.

From Manhattan, Bell trav-

elled to Paris, where he danced with the Théâtre des Champs Elysées and, he says, lived in the same rooming house as the author James Baldwin. He returned to New York in the 1960s and worked odd clerical jobs. Then his life and his fortunes began to slip away.

"It was just amazing to me that one of my patients was

among the first black men in ballet," said Ms Mackin. "He was still incredibly graceful, getting out of bed, slender, sleek."

As he learns to walk again with a stick, Bell says he is not bothered that he will never dance again, because "when you love something, the love for it just goes beyond anything. Dancing is in my soul."

Setback for Yeltsin as his protégé is rejected

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

EVERYONE always knew Boris Yeltsin's young prime minister had about as much chance of being confirmed in his job by Russia's parliament yesterday as Bill Clinton has of becoming Pope. But the man they call the "little computer" put up a respectable fight. It laid the ground for probable victory in the future.

As Russia approaches its fourth week without a government, the Kremlin will now mount an aggressive campaign on behalf of Sergei Kiriyenko, 35, in the hope of persuading parliament to approve him on a second vote, possibly next week. The little-known former provincial banker yesterday won 143 of the 226 votes he needed to be confirmed by the 450-seat State Duma, or lower house: 186 voted against.

However, his rejection was an inevitable part of the haggling between the Kremlin and

parliament - which yesterday was revelling in the chance to flex its muscles at the president. Within 40 minutes, Mr Yeltsin resubmitted his protégé's name, insisting he had no other candidate for the job which became vacant when he unexpectedly sacked Viktor Chernomyrdin and his government last month.

The constitution states that the president must dissolve parliament if it rejects his nomination three times and hold new elections.

That outcome, never likely, receded still further yesterday when Mr Kiriyenko faced the Communist-dominated chamber. He was neither dazzling, amusing, nor loud. But his speech kept intact his reputation as a smart young technocrat: he was self-assured, and well-briefed. Earlier, Boris Yeltsin had used his weekly national radio address to wax lyrical about his "professional manager" who spurns "cheap publicity".

Mr Kiriyenko played that



Sergei Kiriyenko: Gave a good account of himself

part to perfection. His speech was that of a reformer, but one with a gentler touch than the tough-nut pro-market leaders led by Anatoly Chubais. Industrial growth and a strong ruble were priorities but he promised more social protection. "Over the past half a year the government has said the economy is growing," he said. "But why has not a single resident felt this?"

The Communists leader, Gennady Zyuganov, instructed his troops to abstain, saying Mr Yeltsin would never get their support unless he changed course. In a surprise move, the erratic ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy also withdrew his party's support.

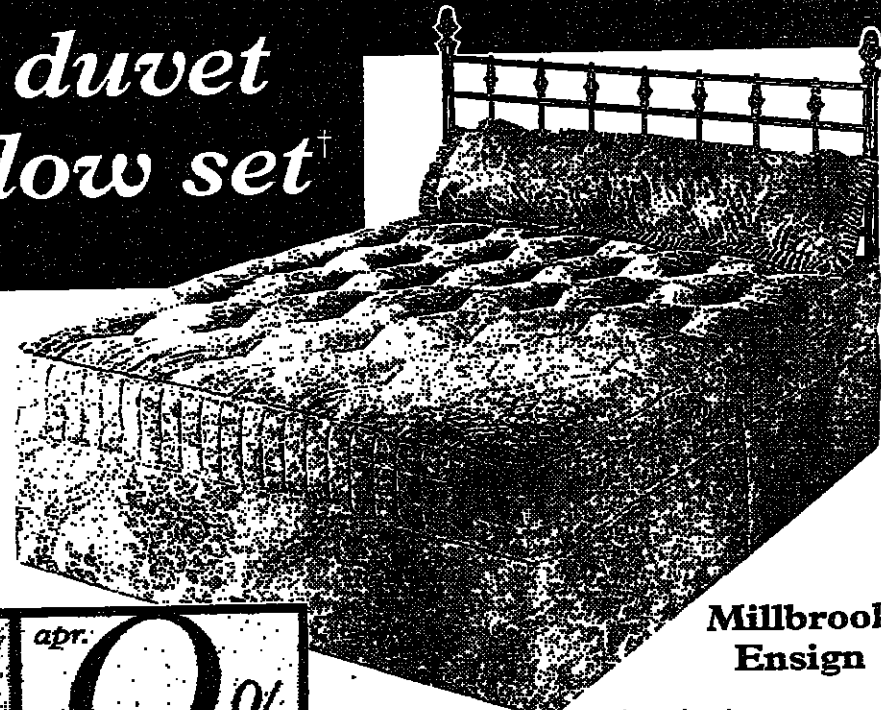
This prolonged limbo is proving revealing: seven years after the end of the Soviet Union, party politics has become a dirty word in government. Thus, Mr Kiriyenko's promise to create a cabinet of "professionals". Thus, too, his boast to the chamber: "I am absolutely independent and do not intend to obey anybody apart from President Boris Yeltsin."

Yesterday he named four ministers whom he proposed to keep in his cabinet: Mikhail Zadornov (Finance); Igor Sergeev (Defence); Yevgeny Primakov (Foreign); and Sergei Stepashin (Interior). All were publicly named by his boss, days ago.

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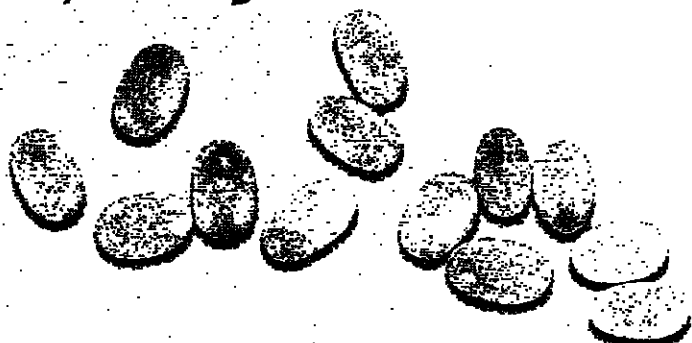
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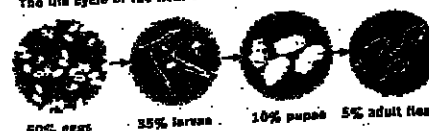
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Finding private passion in a public place

Why is it that some gay men go in search of sexual encounters in lavatories? David Northmore finds out

IF SINGER George Michael had been caught with his pants down in a London public lavatory – rather than a gent's washroom in the neatly manicured Will Rogers Memorial Park in Los Angeles – then he would have received a few quiet words of advice from the local community bobby about his "inappropriate behaviour". He would then have walked away feeling a little embarrassed, but with his reputation intact and no one else knowing anything of the incident.

Last autumn David O'Dowd, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, and the Association of Chief Police Officers issued instructions to chief constables that surveillance operations of cottages (public lavatories used for gay sex) and cruising areas, including the use of pretty policemen as *agents provocateurs*, was no longer acceptable. If there is a perceived problem with such venues, they proclaimed, then the police should get together with gay community organisations to resolve it discreetly.

The Los Angeles Police Department, unfortunately for George Michael, is far less enlightened. But as one American commentator lamented on a British television news bulletin on Thursday morning: "This guy has money, a house and hotel bedrooms at his disposal. So why on earth did he need to go and do this?"

Speaking to the *Pink Paper* earlier this year, a number of cottagers gave their verdict on anonymous, public sex.

"While the gay scene is so structured, cottaging is a far more spontaneous outlet for gay sex," says Henry, a 26-year-old lawyer. "I've used cottages in hospitals, department stores, concert halls, libraries, colleges – even straight pubs – as well as the usual."

But Robert Cole, 40, despises the time he has spent

the cottager being either an elderly or closeted, and invariably married, man is misleading. Sex in public lavatories in the UK is routinely sought by two distinct groups: openly gay men who also frequent gay pubs and clubs; and boys and teenagers keen to explore their sexuality.

This month sees the publication of a survey of men who cottage in north London by the Aids Education Unit of Barnet Healthcare NHS Trust. More

'I even dream about cottaging. You don't know what or who you might find next. It's just so exciting'

hanging around public lavatories. "I started cottaging at 12 because I was too young to go to pubs, but wanted to find a boyfriend. But it then becomes compulsive and a mechanism for avoiding sorting your life out."

Henry isn't moved by that argument: "I even dream about cottaging. You don't know what or who you might find next. It's just so exciting. And it's the very stuff of life. Don't you think?"

Recent research suggests that the stereotypical image of

than 200 men were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire, and the results are eye-opening.

Twenty per cent of those questioned started cottaging between the ages of 10 and 14, and 32 per cent started between the ages of 15 and 19. And the survey's finding that just over 75 per cent of those questioned also regularly visit gay social venues and groups somewhat destroys the myth that cottagers are sad, closeted individuals who are unable to come to terms with their sexuality.

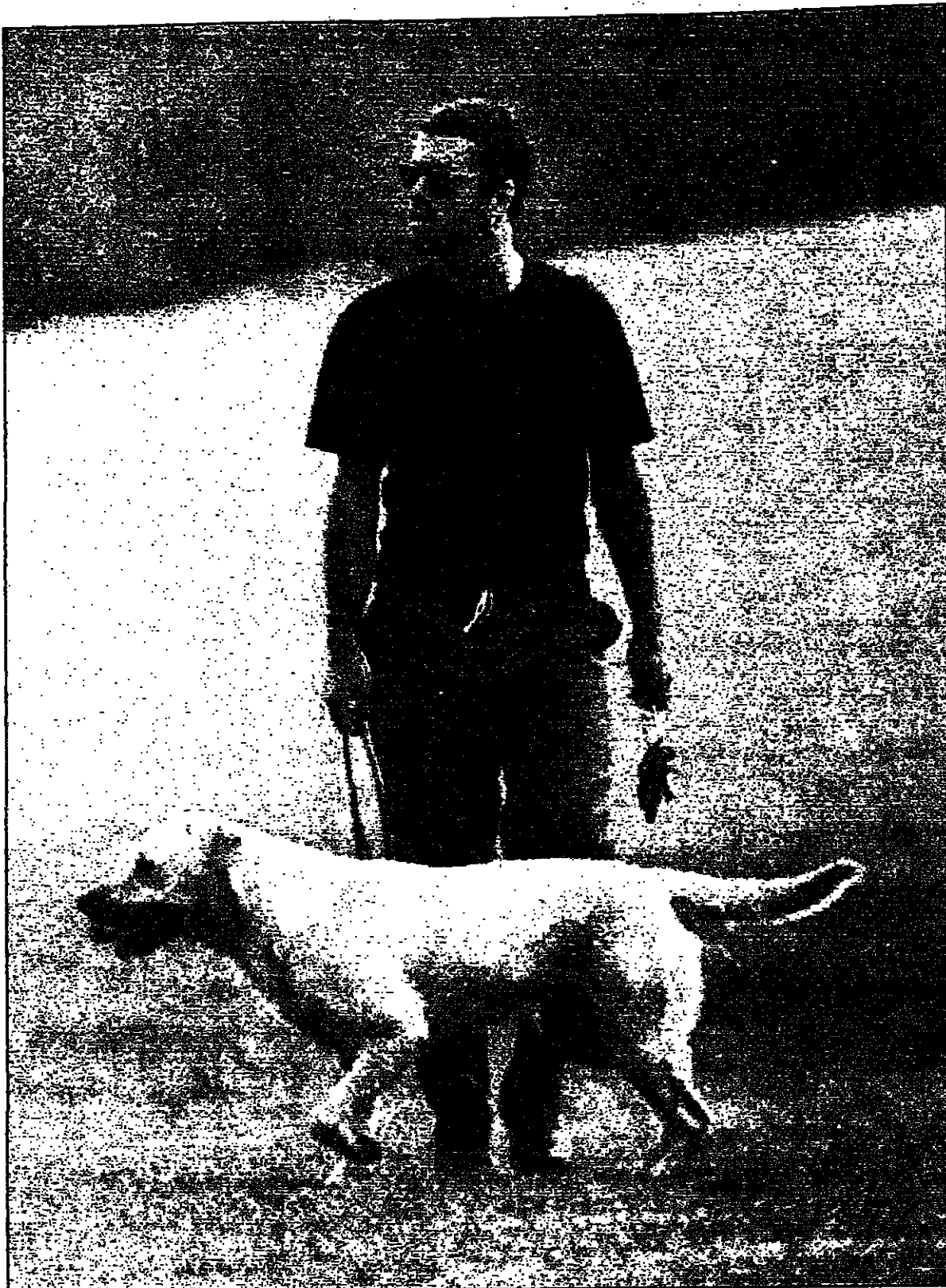
"We have a very good relationship with the local police in case there are any problems with the cruisers up on Hampstead Heath at night," says Jamie Taylor of the group Gay Men Fighting Aids, which provides safer sex advice and condoms at the country's most

famous cruising ground. "The main problem we suffer is complaints from the locals about the amount of condom litter found on the Heath the next morning. But the police are always available if there is any sign of queerbashing, and people generally accept what

goes on up there. The place has also developed quite a social atmosphere with some people just come along to socialise without any intentions of having sex," he adds.

The lessening of the taboo of having sex in cottages and cruising grounds is relatively re-

cent. Even until the mid-1990s the Metropolitan Police would organise major cottaging sweeps that would net dozens of men in one short cost-effective operation. That in turn guaranteed a high rate of convictions in the local magistrates court and an improved crime clear-up rate.



George Michael with his dog on Hampstead Heath. Had he been caught cottaging in Britain, he would have been cautioned, not prosecuted

Photograph: Alan Davidson

George Michael is not the first famous man to be arrested for an offence in a public lavatory. Earlier celebrated cases of men convicted of cottaging and cruising did in fact contribute to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. Two cases in particular – the 1931 conviction of Bobbie Shaw, eldest son of Tory MP Nancy Astor, and Sir John Gielgud, who was arrested in a Chelsea public lavatory in October 1953 – had this effect.

"Lord Astor owned the *Times* and the *Observer*, and was able to ensure that Bobbie Astor's case never made it into the press," says historian Patrick Higgins, author of the *Heterosexual Dictatorship*. "This made him realise just how unjust the law was, and when the debate heated up over the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the *Observer* became one of the main intellectual forces behind that debate. And Lord Astor was the main financial backer of the Homosexual Law Reform Association."

Although Sir John Gielgud's career survived without so much as a blemish, what are the chances of George Michael's surviving likewise? "People will continue to judge Michael on his artistic skills, and you would have to be very small-minded to do otherwise," says pop writer Ian Watson of *Melody Maker*. "What he does with his private life is his business – he is an intensely private person, and I can't imagine that his standing as a singer will suffer in the slightest as a result of this incident."

TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



SENSATIONAL SEAFOOD

A must for foodies: part one of the ultimate guide, by Sophie Grigson and William Black

Plus

■ Anthony Bevin on New Labour's first year

■ Your chance to win a state-of-the-art Olympus digital camera worth £1,300

How robbers took fashion off the peg

FASHION has always been a rapacious business. Labels are counterfeited; designers plagiarise each other's ideas; high street stores plunder the catwalk shows for next season's styles. Now this trend has been taken to its logical conclusion, with the literal theft of entire collections.

In the past week, three London-based designers have fallen victim. On Monday, Effi Zamara, whose clients include socialites Tamara Beckwith and Liz Brewer, arrived at the store she opened off New Bond Street just a fortnight ago to find that all of her stock – 250 suits, dresses and knitwear pieces – had been stolen.

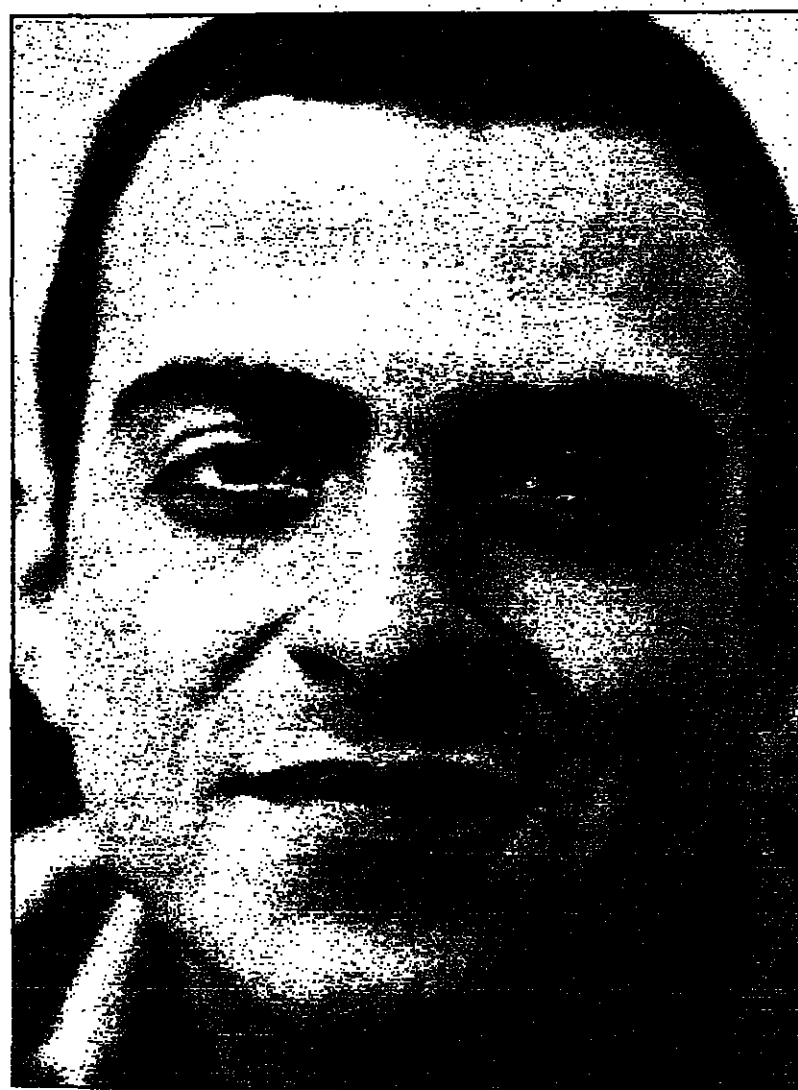
The following day, it was the turn of Antonio Berardi, British Designer of the Year, whose autumn/winter designs were the highlight of London Fashion Week in February. The collection, worth up to £500,000, was snatched from outside his London studio, where it was being unloaded.

On Thursday, the swimwear designer Lisa Bruce arrived at her Knightsbridge shop to find that burglars had smashed through her glass door and taken her entire 1998 stock, worth £100,000. The shop had been open for just six weeks. It marked the relaunch of Ms Bruce's career, after she was forced to liquidate her company two years ago as a result of a legal battle with Marks & Spencer, whom she accused of copying her designs.

It will come as little consolation to Ms Bruce, as she contemplates her ranks of empty rails, to learn that she is in illustrious company. Some of the biggest names in the fashion world have suffered similar raids in recent years, including Christian Lacroix, Bruce Oldfield, Issey Miyake, Mulberry, Hermès and Liz Claiborne.

Scotland Yard detectives are investigating possible links between the three latest incidents. They say it is too early to say whether they were ordinary burglaries, or whether the designers were targeted by professional thieves. Ms Bruce said yesterday: "Someone is trying to put me out of business. I have to ask myself who my enemies are."

Priyesh Shah, Mr Berardi's business partner, is convinced that the theft of their designs was not opportunistic, pointing out that it seems to have been carefully planned and executed. When the van drew up outside the studio, the driver was approached by two men pushing trolleys who asked him whether it was the Berardi delivery. He assented, and the men wheeled away the



Berardi: Collection snatched outside studio

Photograph: Chris Moore

180 pieces, leaving the driver nonplussed. "It may have been people just taking pot luck," said Mr Shah. "But it seems far more likely that the collection was stolen by someone who wanted to copy Antonio's designs, or by a rival designer who wanted to sabotage his work. It does happen."

Police believe that few of the samples taken by professional thieves end up on market stalls with the labels cut out – they are too instantly recognisable and tend to be in tiny sizes, made for skinny models. It is far more likely, they say, that the de-

signs are sent to counterfeiting factories in south-east Asia where they are copied with tiny variations and mass-produced.

Mr Shah believes that some garments are stolen to order on the whim of wealthy women. "It used to be for clients in the Middle East, now it's mainly Russia," he said. "The irony is that organised fashion crime is commonplace in Italy, where Antonio comes from. He never expected anything like this to happen in London."

Kathy Marks

The long road to peace: how blood enemies learned to talk

The search for a new beginning in Northern Ireland has been haunted by history. By David McKittrick in Belfast

ALL OF the participants in the Northern Ireland peace process went to the Stormont talks with the hope of finding a new Ireland, a new agreement for the new millennium. But behind every table stood a ghost; along with a commitment to peace they were haunted by the legacy of centuries of religious strife.

Take the Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. He left the talks for a time on Wednesday to bury his 87-year-old mother, Julia. Born in 1911, she often told the family about growing up in west Cork during the south's troubled passage towards independence. Bertie's father was a member of the 3rd Cork brigade of the IRA. In later life Mrs Ahern would tell tales of how the Blacks and Tans shot all the turkeys on the family farm and how, during the civil war, Free State forces would come to their home and "turn it upside down" because it was regarded as a republican household.

Bertie Ahern has always been a constitutional nationalist, vehemently denying that the IRA of today are the legitimate heirs of the republican forces of the 1920s. Nonetheless folk-memories and family recollections have played an important part in moulding even his generation of southern politicians.

This week he found himself negotiating with northerners whose lives have been more deeply and more recently touched by violence. The purpose of the enterprise was to find a new political dispensation to supersede the imperfect arrangements of the 1920s.

There has never been such a wide-ranging negotiation involving so many points of the political compass, and rarely has such a sense of a historic new beginning been generated.

Mr Ahern found himself coming to grips politically with, for example, Jeffrey Donaldson, one of the Ulster Unionist party's chief negotiators. Mr Donaldson still remembers learning in 1970, when he was seven, that a cousin had been killed by the IRA. An RUC constable, he was one of the policemen killed in the Troubles.

Also in the talks was Gerry Adams, who is used to accusations that he has been a supporter of violence. But his family too has suffered: a nephew was savagely killed by extreme Protestants in the mid-1970s, while his niece's husband died, also at the hands of loyalists, in January of this year. Others in the Sinn Féin delegation, perhaps even a majority of them, have been to jail.

Across the table from them were delegations associated with loyalist paramilitary groups. These also contained people who have lost loved ones, and who have taken life: four of the loyalists there yesterday have killed at least six people, and spent time behind bars as a consequence.

In one sense it was time well spent, for most of them emerged

from the Maze prison changed people, disenchanted with violence and hungry for politics. One of them killed two men and threatened my life, actions which, in the 1970s, were the stuff of paramilitary politics; today he has a deep and genuine longing to have done with war.

It is the sight of conversions such as these, in which hard men learn the hard way about the facts of civilised political life, that give most hope for the future.

How did we get to this point? The purely political parties, excluding Sinn Féin and the loyalists, had been talking together on and off since 1991, when Peter Brooke as Northern Ireland Secretary first brought them together. Those early efforts seemed to come to nothing, although it can now be seen that valuable groundwork was laid for later advances.

It was John Hume, leader of one of the few parties which has never been overtly or covertly involved with violence, who years ago set out the conceptual framework for the talks. He maintained that they should deal with three key sets of relationships: those between Unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland; those between north and south; and the east-west relationship between Britain and the island of Ireland. Its strength was that it was an agenda designed to cope with the facts of history and geography.

John Major and Sir Patrick Mayhew brought the parties together again in mid-1996, but they became bogged down in procedural trench warfare and made little headway.

Then came Sinn Féin. After the July 1997 renewal of the IRA ceasefire, Tony Blair moved swiftly to bring the republicans into the talks, and to set a deadline for their completion. Rev Ian Paisley, who walked out as the republicans walked in, will now oppose the agreement, as he has opposed all past deals.

But crucially David Trimble stayed, though at no point have his party members negotiated with or even spoken to Sinn Féin members. The talks moved slowly, and not as the Government would have wished, but despite difficult moments they did not fall apart.

Until this week they tended to take the form of speechifying rather than productive negotiation, with parties almost endlessly rehearsing their cherished beliefs rather than suggesting compromises. It is a fair bet that without the Government's insistence on a deadline, they would have continued to rehearse them for many more months.

A particularly bad period came at the turn of the year, with some important republican figures breaking away from the IRA and four of David Trimble's 10 Westminster MPs pressing him to quit the negotiations.

Deeper trouble followed when the assassination of loyalist leader Billy Wright by republicans brought a wave of

loyalist violence which included the shooting of Gerry Adams's relative. At that point, attention focussed on the Maze jail, where Mo Mowlam went to calm loyalist prisoners, rather than in the talks: worryingly, politics seemed for a moment to have lost their primacy.

But the talks resumed on schedule, though the progress of negotiations was halted by disputes which led the temporary expulsions first of one of the loyalist parties and then of Sinn Féin. The two governments also produced a paper which was sharply rejected by both Sinn Féin and the IRA: a later draft was however more favourably received by republicans and nationalists, and the talks stayed on track. A particular outcry was caused when a loyalist attack on a bar in the previously peaceful Co Armagh town of Poyntzpass killed two men, Philip Allen and Damien Trainor. A Catholic and a Protestant, they were lifelong friends whose relationship transcended political dispute. The poignancy of their deaths generated momentary despair, yet it did not deflect the course of the talks.

By this time, the outline of an eventual settlement had become clear. A new devolved assembly would be set up in Belfast, while a north-south council would

link the two parts of Ireland. A new concept, that of a British-Irish council, would connect devolved institutions in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

The new deal would include measures to protect civil and political rights, promote equality, and go on to consider the issues of policing, prisoners, the justice system and arms de-commissioning. In total, this amounted to a new political geography of these islands which would address Hume's three-cornered concept.

But while the outline was clear enough, its vital details – as the events of this week showed – remained stubbornly unresolved. Arguments continued over arrangements for the assembly and its relationship with the north-south council. Unionists advocated a modest assembly and an even more modest north-south body; the assembly, in their view, should have no legislative powers and no cabinet to run it, while the north-south institution should be merely consultative.

Over the months, Sinn Féin delegates played their cards close to their chest, favouring a strong north-south body but refusing to admit publicly that an assembly should be part of any deal. This seemed illogical in that any cross-border institution would have to be anchored in a Belfast assembly, but it made sense: politically in that it meant the republicans gave no hostages to fortune and made no concessions.

On the Unionist side, however, a number of the negotiators readily contemplated cooperation with constitutional nationalists such as the SDLP, but balked at the idea of ever working with Sinn Féin. A few months ago, Unionist negotiator Ken Maginnis, for example, described Sinn Féin as "unreconstructed terrorists," declaring: "I could never give cognisance to them, not as long as I live."

The useful thing was that all delegates complained that its stark Sixties design offered no intimate hidey-holes for private politicking. In the canteen, most politicians tended not to mix, while the bar was found unappealing. Comparing it to an RUC interrogation centre, Gerry Adams called it "Castlercagh with coffee".

But not all the business was done at Stormont, with both Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern receiving a flow of visitors to London and Dublin. Adams went to Downing St several times, but a much more frequent visitor was David Trimble. The Prime Minister knew that no deal could be arrived at without the approval of the Unionist leader, and set out to win his trust. He appears to have succeeded in this – which was no mean feat, since Mr Trimble's precise thought processes all along remained a mystery even to some of his closest associates in his own party.

One of the few moments of levity came earlier this month when Mo Mowlam announced that so much progress had been made that the deadline had been advanced. This turned out to be an April fool's joke: in fact the story of this month has been one of hold-ups and apparent setbacks. The talks chairman, George Mitchell, was to produce his working paper on Friday of

last week, but it was not until the early hours of Tuesday that it emerged from his office, the delay signifying much behind-the-scenes disagreement. Once it arrived, however, the paper served its purpose of confirming the shape of yesterday's agreement while leaving key details open to last-minute renegotiation. By this stage, Sinn Féin had become the dog that didn't bark: republicans seemed to accept a clearly partitionist document with something approaching approval, with the noisy objections coming instead from the Trimble Unionists.

Yet even as the Unionists complained, it seemed they were coming to terms with the new political contours laid out in the Mitchell document. The demand was for changes to the document, not the scrapping of it, and it served as the basis of the final burst of negotiation.

In the final days Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern arrived, bringing with them the political muscle to dislodge the parties from their treasured positions. They have been days and nights of hard pounding, but they have ended in success. The spectre of all that unresolved history lay heavily on everyone, but in the end it proved not strong enough to overcome the spirit of peace and the desire to put an end to war.



Symbol of hope: The peace statue in Craigavon Bridge, Londonderry

Photograph: Ian Torrance

There have never been negotiations involving so many points of the political compass, and rarely has such a sense of historic new beginning been generated

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No need to rubbish Rudolf

Rudolf Nureyev is the latest victim of the tiresome documentary genre that knocks famous people. This time they chose the wrong man, says Louise Levene

SPEAKING ill of the dead used to be taboo. Now it's a cottage industry. Approach a TV commissioning editor with the outline for a documentary celebrating the life and influence of St Francis of Assisi and you will be given short shrift. Return two weeks later with a proposal establishing that St Francis was an infamous racketeer whose hobbies included badger-baiting and sheep-shagging and you are on to a winner.

Posthumous shafting of the glorious dead is a short-cut to notoriety, but it is an ugly trade. Of course, it is sometimes helpful to look at established reputations from a different perspective, but this justification weakens when you reflect that it only works one way. Suggest that Emperor Bokassa was a genial host with an impish sense of humour and see how far you get. Viz the public outcry at the recent Oswald Mosley drama series, which had the brass neck to suggest that a man who could lead an entire political movement could possibly possess an ounce of charm. We insist that the bad stay bad. But this still leaves plenty of room to put the boot into anyone, from Mother Teresa to Enid Blyton (both victims of Channel 4 revisionism). The *fin de siècle* mood seems to force us to look back in anger at the great and the good.

Rudolf Nureyev was undeniably great and he was also very, very good. Ross MacGibbon's ungracious little film would like to suggest otherwise. MacGibbon knows his stuff. He was a dancer with the Royal Ballet and his partner, Julie Kanavagh, has written a major biography of Frederick Ashton and has been approached to write another of Nureyev. Which makes *Nureyev Unzipped* even more depressing. With the collusion of a number of people who are old enough to know better, MacGibbon paints a picture of a slightly second-rate dancer who covered up his inadequacies with a charismatic stage presence, and who (shock, horror) was not the princely heterosexual he portrayed on stage.

Nureyev's talent hit the West for six when he defected in 1961. Young, exotically handsome and gorgeous in lights, he was bedsit-wall material from the word go. But his celebrity — like that of Mick Jagger and George Best — was always firmly underpinned by his gifts. The founder of

the Royal Ballet Ninette de Valois (no doubt due to star in a forthcoming documentary depicting her as a lousy talent-spotter who couldn't run a whelk stall) knew instantly that she had to have him for her company and for Fonteyn. When the couple first danced at Covent Garden in the romantic melodrama *Giselle*, Nureyev's account of the heartless, randy young aristocrat transformed by remorse astonished the audience and drew an equally remarkable performance from Fonteyn. There were 23 curtain calls.

Nureyev's arrival was a bit of a fiasco for de Valois's hard-working homeboys. But his pantherish dancing and his ardent expressiveness set new standards for men in ballet. He continued to dance almost until his death in 1993. He last danced in Britain in 1991 in a mildly embarrassing programme that existed merely to provide a showcase for his own fascinating performance in Fleming Flindt's *The Lesson*, in which he played a dancing master who drives his pupils to death.

Decline? MacGibbon should enjoy such a decline. Besides, he didn't just dance. His directorship of the Paris Opera Ballet raised the company to the international top three and nurtured an entire generation of sensational dancers and powerful actors such as Laurent Hilaire, Charles Jude and Sylvie Guillem. His productions were fabulous. The film doesn't mention any of that.

Given Nureyev's reputation, surely no one could be found to suggest that he wasn't a great technician and an inspiration to other dancers? Many colleagues and friends are conspicuous by their absence — no Vladimir Vasiliev, no Lynn Seymour, no Patricia Ruanne no Guillem. But step forward Sir Anthony Dowell, artistic director of the Royal Ballet (a god-like stylist who went on to steer Covent Garden to millennial glory). Or a jumped-up porteur with the administrative flair of a lobotomised weasel? It depends who's in the editing suite.

Sir Anthony is one of the few real stars to appear in *Nureyev Unzipped*. Eva Evdokimova and Wayne Eagling (hardly household names) pop up briefly to remark that Rudolf went on dancing far too long — which is a bit pos-and kettles coming from those two, quite frankly. Sir Anthony

apparently gave the film crew a long interview, in which he must surely have expressed the greatest admiration for Nureyev. They cut out that bit. Instead we get him kvetching regretfully about how he was embarrassing to watch in later years.

Reading between the edits it is very probable that Sir Anthony has been stitched up and that his mild reservations have been exaggerated by being interspersed with the voiceover's carping. "By the late Sixties, his dancing was losing its Leningrad bloom. Dancers like Anthony Dowell could do anything he could do and

with far greater finesse." Him and my aunt Fanny, says John Percival, ballet critic, friend and early biographer of Nureyev. Percival is in no doubt where the greater talent lay and is incensed by MacGibbon's film. "It's all very well for these pip-squeaks who weren't very good dancers themselves to come along and denigrate people who were much better. But we know that the Royal Ballet, at that time, had some very fine dancers, but Nureyev always looked the best." Derek Deane (who danced with the Royal Ballet in the Seventies and who now heads the English National Ballet) is

happy to set the record straight on the "weak technique" score: "He certainly had wonderful batterie, wonderful pirouette. He had great strength of technique that went along with his animal magnetism."

The film's biggest trick is to present wild assertions as fact and then attempt to insinuate the voice of reason. Nureyev, we are told, was "often described as the greatest male dancer in the history of classical ballet... nobody could do it like Rudolf. He was able to leap higher and turn faster than any other dancer before or since." No he wasn't. Nobody with any

Nureyev in action: His technique cannot be measured by how high he could jump.

Photograph: Hulton Getty

sense ever said such things and he would have been the first to deny them. Juxtaposing this nonsense with useful accounts of his dancing in middle age enables them to paint a sorry picture not of a has-been, but of a never-really-was.

Those of us who saw him in his prime are in no doubt about Nureyev, but you didn't have to be there. We may have to take the greatness of Vestris and Nijinsky on trust, but Nureyev's reputation is preserved on film. Lots of it. Which makes it strange that a documentary arguing about his place in some stupid technical league table should make so little use of the available footage. Apart from repeated shots of him moaning tragically about in an early film of *Giselle* and a tiny snatch from *The Corsair*, shot on the Soviet equivalent of Super-8, we see little evidence of his technique (or lack of it).

MacGibbon's film makes much of Nureyev's supposed technical inferiority to his exact contemporaries Vladimir Vasiliev and Yuri Soloviev. Rather than celebrating the fact that Russia was able to produce three superlative male dancers in one generation, they remind us that the great Soloviev could jump higher. So what? Dick Fosbury could jump higher. By implying that a dancer's technique can be measured by their elevation or the speed with which they pirouette Nureyev is rendered an easy target. Nureyev was a rare and special dancer because he combined good technique with amazing projection. He brought fairy tales to life. Guillem was once asked where she had learned to dance *Giselle*. She replied: "I just danced it with Rudolf and looked in his eyes."

I don't doubt that MacGibbon is a sincere Nureyev fan, but his decision to angle his film in this tiresome way will chip away at the dancer's greatness. People who know nothing about Nureyev will come away with the impression that he was Not As Good As Everybody Says He Was. "Long after they have forgotten the others, they will remember Rudolf Nureyev," intones the voiceover in elegiac mood. No doubt. But if mealy-mouthed documentaries like this have their way it won't be such a beautiful memory.

'Nureyev Unzipped' will be shown on Channel 4 at 8pm on 13 April



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THE WEEK IN RADIO

ROBERT HANKS

WAR, SAID John Keegan in the opening volley of this year's Reith Lectures, is the scourge of our century; for the first time in history, it has replaced famine and pestilence as a source of danger to the common man. You could also say that change is the real scourge of our century, and war is one of its results, as incomprehension and frustration resolve themselves in violence.

That's not to say that people hate all change; but we find it hard to handle change that has no evident reason. This century has been rich in deliberately disorientating change — like the supermarket that shifts the dairy produce every six months, putting the customer in unexplored aisles in the hope of encouraging new commerce.

Which brings us to Radio 4. The new schedule hasn't simply been an affair of displaced cereals and hard-to-locate soaps: much of the old stock was stale and you would be hard put to find a rationale for it. But the effect on the consumer has been similar to a supermarket switch-around: mild annoyance at not being able to find things in their usual place, and familiar brands suddenly disappearing off the shelves altogether.

That analogy probably won't go much further — for one thing, the supermarket is for most of us a once-a-week expedition; Radio 4 is a constant home companion. Then again, these days you can order supermarket shopping from home, either over the Internet or through a home delivery service, something I know a lot about because I heard it discussed on the new, extra-long *You and Yours* on Tuesday afternoon. And then I heard it discussed again about four hours later on the new magazine *Shop Talk*.

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Archbishop Seraphim of Athens and All Greece

ARCHBISHOP Seraphim headed the Orthodox Church in Greece for nearly a quarter of a century at a difficult period of its history. He took over the church leadership at the end of the period of dictatorship and led it through the years of democratisation, secularisation and entry into European institutions, processes that have removed the Church's monopoly in many areas of national life. The Church tried to resist many of these processes – such as dilution of its privileged constitutional position, the institution of civil marriage and divorce and the legalisation of abortion. It was during the final months of the colonels' regime that Seraphim became prominent. He was chosen over the then primate Archbishop Ieronymos to swear in as new president Phaedon Gkizikis, who came to power in November 1973 after President Papadopoulos had been ousted in a coup. Ieronymos protested in vain at this slight to his authority, but his protests were ignored. Seen as being too close to the old regime, Ieronymos resigned three weeks later.

Seraphim was to win the election for a new primate held at Petraki monastery on 12 January 1974, but the controversy surrounding the poll lingered. The regime had disqualified 34 of the 66 bishops in a bid to prevent one of Ieronymos's allies being chosen. Of the 32 who were still eligible, two boycotted the session, one walked out in protest and another refused to vote. Seraphim gained 20 votes and was duly approved by the regime. He was installed as Archbishop of Athens and All Greece four days later.

Seraphim set a careful course from the start, using his enthronement address to urge unity in the Church. "Forsake the hawks, for they stir up con-

fusion and filth," he told the crowds in the packed cathedral. "Embrace the doves that bear the olive branch of peace." He pledged to reform the church administration, to fill vacant sees and restore good relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In a coded reference, he also vowed to give everything, even his life, for "our unrepented brethren", the Greek minority in Albania which was suffering ethnic and religious repression.

Within months of Seraphim's installation, Greece was wracked by further political turmoil and the Cyprus crisis, which precipitated the return of democracy. Seraphim had to tackle the perennial problem of relations with the state, in which he showed firmness tempered with flexibility, preferring to negotiate with successive governments behind the scenes.

One of his greatest challenges came in April 1987 when parliament approved a law to expropriate monastic land, redistributing some to poor peasants, and to take over administration of urban church-owned assets. Seraphim chose to compromise, allowing land redistribution while opposing nationalisation of church and monastery land. He also showed flexibility over the prime minister Andreas Papandreu's divorce and remarriage, despite criticism from members of the Holy Synod.

Seraphim also had to tackle relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, which maintains primacy over the entire Orthodox world and direct control over the Orthodox Church in Crete, the Dodecanese and Mount Athos (with jurisdiction over parts of northern Greece shared with Athens). Despite the welcome given by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios to Seraphim's election

as Greek primate and Seraphim's early pledge, relations remained uneasy. Neither Dimitrios nor his successor, Bartholomew, ever made an official visit to Athens during Seraphim's tenure, despite recent attempts at a rapprochement.

Seraphim was born Vissarion Tikas in Artesian near Karditsa in Thessaly and as a young man entered the monastery in Korona near Karditsa. He was ordained deacon in 1938 and after taking a diploma at the Theological School of Athens University in 1941 he was ordained priest the following year. During the Second World War he joined the resistance in the Greek Democratic National Union (EDES), a resistance group led by General Napoleon Zervas which fought other resistance groups, especially the Communist-dominated ELAS, as much as it fought the occupiers. Seraphim helped relieve the widespread privations, including the provision of meals to starving children.

After the war he was clerk and later secretary of the Holy Synod, the governing body of the Orthodox Church in Greece. He became a bishop at a relatively young age, being consecrated Metropolitan of Arta in September 1949. After nine years he was transferred to the diocese of Ioannina.

There he played a key role in keeping alive the aspirations of many Greeks to gain control of the southern part of Albania (known as North Epirus) with its Greek minority. Seraphim was president of the National Committee for the Liberation of North Epirus until it was suppressed by the Greek government in 1972 when diplomatic relations with Albania were restored. He also participated as Metropolitan of Ioannina in the



Seraphim: "Forsake the hawks, for they stir up confusion and filth"

first pan-Orthodox conference, held in Rhodes in 1962.

Seraphim was intelligent and straightforward, with a direct way of saying what he thought. While firm on essentials, he was able to compromise on peripheral issues in what he believed were the long-term interests of

the Church in Greece. Although much of his stewardship hinged on relations with the state, the Church has adapted to a greater distance from secular power while maintaining its authority and central position in Greek life.

Vissarion Tikas, priest: born Artesian, Greece 26 October 1913; ordained deacon 1938 taking the monastic name Seraphim, priest 1942; Metropolitan of Arta 1949-58; Metropolitan of Ioannina 1958-74; Archbishop of Athens and All Greece 1974-98; died Athens 10 April 1998.

Alain Bosquet

COSMOPOLITAN authors are not respected in our world of increasingly self-centred little nations. The very word "cosmopolitan" is enough to arouse suspicions, suggesting someone lacking in seriousness, hardly respectable, not even genuinely "foreign". The poet Alain Bosquet was such an adventurer – in language, living and literature. No one could have been less "one of us". His very birth, the fruit of a hodge-podge of nationalities, made him questionable, even problematical. He bore the sort of name – Anatole Bisk – that the British find funny, bestowed upon him by a father of Alsatian-Belgian origins.

His mother, Berthe Turinsky, came of an old German-Jewish family, and later Bosquet was to pay tribute to her and to the towering patriarchal figure of her father. His father, Alexandre Bisk, was a poet, and a good translator who made the first Russian versions of Rainer Maria Rilke. He was also a dealer in that most romantically cosmopolitan of goods, rare postage stamps. His mother was an accomplished violinist, and when the family moved to Varna in Bulgaria, she helped to scrape a living by giving violin lessons, while his father took on translations, then as now always badly paid.

In 1925 they moved to Brussels, where in 1938 Anatole studied at the Université Libre, with a special interest in Romance philology, and started a poetry magazine, *Pyralis*. With the Nazi invasion, he was mobilised in May 1941, and took part in the brief Belgian campaign, then was incorporated in the French army. After the fall of France, he spent some time in Montpellier, then went on to Paris, where he acquired a passport to cosmopolitanism of the highest quality, the *Diplôme de l'Ecole de Perfectionnement des Professeurs de Langue et de Littérature Françaises*. It was then that he changed his name to Alain Bosquet.

In 1942, he arrived in a city he always loved, New York, helped edit the Free French magazine *Voix de France*, and with the Russian writer Yvan Goll started a literary review, *Hémisphères*. At this period he made many significant literary friends and encountered some famous figures – Maurice Maeterlinck, Jules Romains, Thomas Mann, Marc Chagall, Hermann Broch, Béla Bartók among them.

One of the most influential writers he met was André Breton, the high priest and chief commissar of Surrealism, who published his poems in 1931 while Roger Caillois, a specialist in South American literature, introduced him in the pages of *Les Lettres Françaises* in Buenos Aires. Bosquet again put on uniform, this time with the American army, and saw service in Texas, California and Maryland before being shipped to North-east Ireland in December 1943.

Nineteen forty-four saw him in London at General Eisenhower's headquarters with the task of examining the German coastal defences in Occupied France, with a view to opening the Second Front. He departed on the Normandy beaches, then moved with the American troops through northern France and into Germany where he was

one of the first to enter the Buchenwald concentration camp.

His next post was as liaison officer with the quadripartite control commission in Berlin. Nineteen forty-five saw the publication of his first collection, *La Vie est châtiment*. In 1947 Bosquet founded a German-language review, *Das Lot* ("The Sounding Line"), of which Gottfried Benn was to say that it was the determining factor in the revival of poetry in Germany.

In 1951 he was installed more or less permanently in Paris, where he worked with Albert Camus on *Carnet* and started contributing reviews and essays to *Le Monde*, *Figaro* and the *Nonette Revue Française*. In the late 1950s, he taught French literature in the US, at Brandeis University and the universities of Madison and Milwaukee.

He returned to teach American literature at the Université de Lyon and to work as producer and commentator on French radio. He became reader for several important publishing houses and directed collections of new poetry. In 1980, this cosmopolitan wanderer was finally naturalised as a French citizen.

Alain Bosquet's literary career was launched, and he became the author of a score of books of poetry. *Langue morte* won the first of his many awards, the Prix Guillaume Apollinaire, in 1951. Others included the Prix Max Jacob for *Deuxième Testament* (1959), the Grand Prix de la Poésie de l'Académie Française for *Quatre testaments et autres poèmes* (1967) and the Prix Goncourt de la Poésie for *Le Tourment de Dieu* (1987).

Many of these volumes were translated into almost every European language. Among the distinguished translators of his work into English were his friend Samuel Beckett, Edouard Roditi and Lawrence Durrell. In return, Bosquet translated Durrell's poems and a selection of work by the great Serbo-Croat poet Vasko Popa, who reciprocated with a selection of Bosquet's earlier poetry published in Belgrade in 1958.

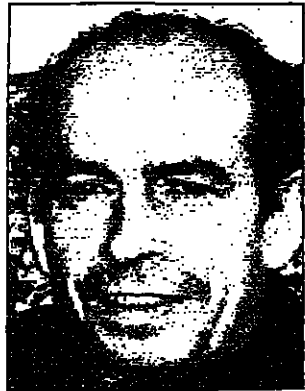
Bosquet also wrote fine literary reviews and appreciations of countless younger poets, as well as substantial essays on Saint-Jean Perse, Pierre Emmanuel, Eugène Ionesco, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. He compiled authoritative anthologies of contemporary American and French poets, and his own work as a poet appeared in a 900-page collected 1945 edition, *Poésies complètes* (1945-1946): *Je ne suis pas un poète d'eau douce* ("I am no milk-and-water poet").

Indeed, Alain Bosquet's was an original voice working in a broad French literary tradition of lyrical contestation. He was a poet in a modern style of classic realism, with an immense variety of themes and an inexhaustible inventiveness of tone, expressed with a passionate lucidity that set him apart from the majority of younger French poets taking the easy way out in empty linguistic obscurity.

James Kirkup

Anatole Bisk (Alain Bosquet), poet, novelist, translator: born Odessa, Soviet Union 28 March 1919; married 1954 Norma Caplan; died Paris 17 March 1998.

John Grey



JOHN GREY personified the image of design consultant as environmentalist as artist.

In 1987, in his 32nd year, he co-founded Halpen, Grey, Vermeer, a design consulting company which specialised in corporate identity and communication. With the philosophy "Design is about communication, not decoration", it became

associated with the first rank of British design, its client list including Unilever, Schroders, Lloyds Bank, TSB, Mobil, British Airways, Tesco, Royal Mail and Greenpeace.

Grey's interest in environmental and humanitarian causes attracted him to the world of Media Natura, the British green design and media charity supported by a commercial consultancy. In 1995, having amicably parted company with Halpen, Grey, Vermeer, he accepted the onerous role of chairman and managing director of Media Natura.

Over the last two years he had implemented new and creative communication programmes for organisations as varied in their needs and aspirations as Amnesty, Water Aid, Intermediate Technology, Color Gas, Sainsbury's Environmental Department, the Co-operative

Retail Society and the National Provident Institution. To each he gave his unstinting energy, optimism and poetic imagination. His legacy lies in such logos as that of the environmental group Plandlife, which is in the shape of a leaf-form wrapping itself around the globe – the perfect image for a group set up to preserve rare plants and recreate lost countryside habitats in Britain.

One project in which he played a key role was the setting up in 1996 of the Marine Stewardship Council. He brought into being that blend of business experts and environmentalists which governmental bureaucrats rarely consider. The council is now a source of inspiration to all those concerned with the maintenance of world-wide fish stocks, bringing together Unilever and the World Wildlife Fund to help cer-

tify and maintain ecological standards.

Born in 1956, Grey inherited the dark Hispanic good looks of his mother, Magda, who was born into one of the old families of Cadiz, which had intermarried with an Italian family from Genoa. With an Irish father, Grey combined the European personality of a Latinised Celt with that of a sophisticated Londoner.

His school days at a Sussex comprehensive school were short-lived. He chose to end them at the tender age of 15 without even one O level. He assured his mother that she should not trouble herself unduly with such a decision, taken without her permission, because he promised she would one day know him as a successful member of society – and almost immediately he proudly gave her the news that he had

found employment with a local newspaper, selling advertising.

So began his early entry into the adult world, and he continued, without an academic qualification to his name, to make his reputation in the highly competitive media and communications industry. He learned the techniques of successful sales marketing strategies for publishing houses such as IPC and Haymarket. In 1984 he launched a design management agency representing independent designers and in 1987 became a co-founder of Halpen, Grey, Vermeer.

His marriage in 1995 to Catherine Maxwell Stuart gave Grey a life in Peeblesshire in dramatic contrast with that of London. It was focused on the historic castellated house of Traquair, which had been the royal hunting lodge of the Stuarts. Catherine succeeded her

father in 1990 not only as Laird of Traquair but as the brewer of "Traquair Ale", and the two of them successfully relaunched the image of the brewery, the smallest in Scotland. Grey was completely at home in the world of all those who regard Traquair in its beautiful setting on the banks of the Tweed as Scottish rural life at its most meaningful and creative.

Grey began his fight against lung cancer not long after the birth of his daughter Isabella three months ago, and despite his illness proved himself to be a loving and attentive father. He died on his 42nd birthday.

Richard Demarco

John Patrick Lonergan (John Grey), design consultant and environmentalist: born 17 March 1956; married 1995 Catherine Maxwell Stuart (one daughter); died Innerleithen, Peeblesshire 17 March 1998.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS
HART: On 29 March, to Jemima (nee Silcock) and James, twin sons, Thomas Richard William and Harry Frederick Zachariah.

SANDERSON: On 1 April, at Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford to Alice and Caroline, a daughter, Jennifer Anne.

DEATHS
DAVID: Dr David Surrey. Died suddenly at home in Puttenham on 9 April. Funeral service in Puttenham Parish Church at 3pm on Monday 20 April. Family flowers only. Donations to RSPB. Enquiries to: Farrahlin Funeral Service 01252 711444.

IN MEMORIAM
CHAPPELLE, Dominic: Simon James, kidnapped in Cambodia 11 April 1994.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Deaths, Weddings, Anniversaries, Memorials) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephoned on 020 292 2000 or faxed on 020 292 2000 and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays
TODAY: Miss Janet Allen, former Headmistress, Benenden School, 62; Viscount Buckmaster, former diplomat, 77; Mr Joseph Burnett Stuart, former chairman, Robert Fleming Holdings, 68; Professor Raymond Carr, former Warden, St Antony's College, Oxford, 79; Mr John Cryer MP, 34; Mr Gertrude de Ruyter, clarinetist, 72; Sir Oscar de Ville, former chairman, Meyer International, 75; Mr Clive Exton, scriptwriter, 68; Miss Jill Gascoigne, actress, 61; Mr Joel Grey, actor and singer, 60; Mr Michael Hindley, MBE, 51; Sir Robert Maclean, honorary president, Standard Holdings, 90; Mr Derek Martin, actor, 65; Dame Anne Poole, former chief nursing officer, Department of Health, 84; Mr Richard Wainwright, former MP, 80; Professor Michael Wright, Vice-Chancellor, Aston University, 51. **TOMORROW**: Mr Alan Ayscough, playwright, 59; Mr Raymond Berne, economist and politician, 74; Mr Peter Bradley MP, 45; Mr Ian Butler, former chairman, Cookson Group, 73; Miss Mommert Caballe, operatic singer, 65; Mr David Cassidy, singer, 49; Mr Brian Connell, writer and broadcaster, 82; Mr Huw Edwards MP, 45; Miss Elspet Gray (Lady Rix), actress, 69; Mr Fabian Hamilton MP, 43; Mr Lionel Hampton, bandleader, 85; Mr Harry Hewitt, former chairman, Johnson Matthey, 78; The Right Rev John Hughes, former Bishop of Croydon, 90; Mr Uwe Kitzinger, former President, Templeton College, Oxford, 78; Mr Hardy Kruger, actor, 70; The Earl of Limerick, chairman, Pirelli UK, 68; Mr Alfred Mabbs, architect, 77; Mr Bryan Magee, writer, 86; Air Marshal Sir Harold Maguire, 86; Mr Eric Meade, chartered accountant, 75; Miss Marion Merton MP, 39; Miss Ann Miller, actress and singer, 75; Mr George Robertson MP,

Secretary of State for Health, 52; Mrs Wendy Savage, gynaecologist, 63; Dr Kennedy Simmonds, former prime minister, St Kitts-Nevis, 62; Miss Jane Withers, actress, 72.

Anniversaries
TODAY: Birth: Christopher Smart, poet, 1722; James Parkinson, discoverer of Parkinson's disease, 1755. Deaths: John Galt, novelist, 1839; Charles Reade, novelist and playwright, 1884. On this day Napoleon abdicated, and was banished to the Isle of Elba, 1814; George Bernard Shaw's play *Pymon* opened in London, 1914. Today is the first day of Passover, and Feast Day of St Barsanaphios, St Gemma Galgani, St Godeberta, St Guthlac, St Isaac of Spoleto and St Stanislaus of Cracow. **TOMORROW**: Births: James Louis Garvin, newspaper editor, 1868; Bobby Moore, footballer, 1941. Deaths: William Kent, landscape gardener and architect, 1748; Sir Archibald Hector Macdonald, plastic surgeon, 1960; Joe Louis (Joseph Louis Barrow), heavyweight boxer, 1981. On this day the Union Jack (Union Flag) was first adopted in England, 1606; the first manned space flight was made by the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, 1961. **TOMORROW** is Easter Day and the Feast Day of St Alferius, St Julius I, pope, St Sabas the Goth and Others and St Zeno of Verona.

Lectures
TODAY
National Gallery: Jacqueline Ansell, "Hats (2): Vigor Le Brun, Self Portrait in a Straw Hat", 12pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Louise Leates, "The Loves of the Gods: stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in decorative art", 2.30pm.

ARGUMENTS FOR EASTER

In the gap between Passover and Passion

Today is holy to both Jews and Christians, but for very different reasons. Yet, argues John Kennedy, both contain echoes of the older *Epic of Gilgamesh*

tamed by a temple harlot, and makes for the city. Here he joins Gilgamesh in a badly destructive wrestling bout. They huddy up – Hollywood fashion – and create more havoc among Uruk's enemies. The gods are outraged. The goddess Ishtar, whose advances Gilgamesh has resisted, urges the deities to destroy one of the rampaging pair.

Now the tale becomes sombre. The gods select Enkidu for death. He sickens, and dies after 12 days. Gilgamesh holds his dead companion in his arms till "the worm of death falls from his nose". He refuses to accept his loss, and goes in quest of some antidote to mortality. He meets Eridu the wise tavern keeper. She tells him to "feed your belly, oil your body, embrace your wife, and take your young son by the hand" – to seek consolation now, and in the following generations.

Unconsoled, Gilgamesh crosses the Waters of Death. There he meets Utanapishtim and his wife, the survivors of the Flood. She tells Gilgamesh of the prickly plant of immortality which grows at the bottom of the Waters of Death. The king dives for the plant and brings it to the surface. But, while he bathes, a serpent swallows the hopes of Gilgamesh does in the city. He is

immortality are thwarted. He returns to the city, "for only the city continues".

The common elements between this and the Bible are fascinating, and so is that fundamental divergence between Christian and Jewish world views. In the face of grief and loss, the tavern keeper offers simply the joy of life, supremely in its continuation down through the generations. The glory of the Passover faith is surely this: central to its imaginative richness, its moral power, lies the conviction of the chosen nature of this people.

The Christian sense of destiny is sharply different. It claims to have fulfilled the longings for immortality found in Gilgamesh five millennia ago. The claim is that the way to eternal life is found in Christ's self-giving love: that, by his death, Christians escape death. This truth, so deeply felt, has embarrassing implications for the rest of humanity.

What of those for whom that truth is incomprehensible? The question is more than embarrassing in relation to the Jews. For by their very existence they contradict the Christian claim to possess the truth. The outcome has been horrific, for Christians have learned better to hate Jews than to love humanity.

So what to do? The easy answer is

to let the modern secular state arbitrate between religions. Maybe. But the modern state can be a bit careless of religious sensibilities. In its self-sufficient hedonism, is a kind of Gilgamesh. It is also possible to attempt a bogus reconciliation between religions – as is so often found in sloppy use of the idea of the "Judeo-Christian tradition", whose pretensions need to be mocked on this of all days. These humilities may help you get elected mayor of New York – but, given the historical record, it dishonours Jews and lets Christians off the hook.

This religious problem must be addressed from within faith communities, especially the Christian community, which has so frequently disdained unbelievers, and created the demonic myth of the Christ-killing Jews. Once that evil that has been acknowledged, it is possible to admit that people of faith do have quite incompatible world views, which simply cannot be reconciled. They must admit that their gods are leading them on a hard road of pilgrimage.

This is not a road to fake reconciliation. It is a road where each tradition wrestles with what it means to be divine, human, animal – and leaves to their gods the reconciliation of sharply wildly differing traditions.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Ireland's peace is worth the candle

WE should all share in the sense of joyful bewilderment at the news from Belfast. Can it really be true that they've persuaded Gerry Adams that there is more to a solution than "Brits Out"? Can they really have made David Trimble, the militant Unionist hero of Drumree, sign up to cross-border, all-Ireland bodies? Can they really have turned what seemed like the ultimate zero-sum conflict into a positive-sum game?

It has been a long night's journey into day. The origins of today's settlement go back to the Downing Street Agreement of December 1993 and, indeed, the derided "talks about talks" initiated by the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, almost a decade ago. The moral, political and physical commitment of all those who have been involved in the process has been impressive. It is right to pay more than a routine tribute to those whose energy and vision have helped to see the process through.

British statesmen have not always prospered when they intervened in Ireland: neither have they always served Ireland well. Stretching back centuries the political career of many a politician has foundered on the "Irish question". But in John Major and Tony Blair these islands found two prime ministers who understood the scale of the task and the political risks but who still felt that peace was worth the candle.

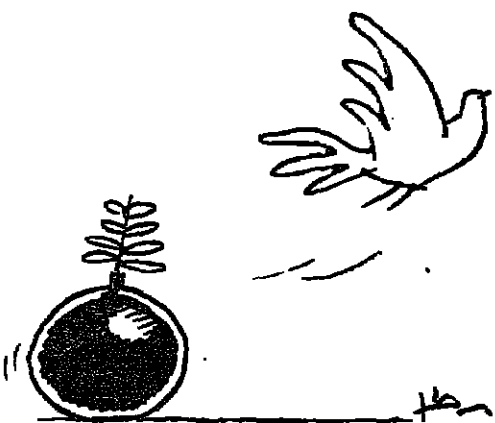
Even strong, patient and dogged leadership, though, was not enough. The negotiating skills and bravery of Mo Mowlam (not least when she visited the Maze prison) were also essential. We should also be thankful for the support provided by President Clinton and his "lending" us the trusted George Mitchell as chairman of the talks. Senator Mitchell in turn could not have succeeded without a change in mood amongst Northern Irish politicians. He in turn could not have succeeded without a change in mood amongst Northern Irish politicians.

The casual visitor to Northern Ireland is often told by people there that what they want is for their political leaders to simply sit down together, talk, and try to come to some agreement. Now almost all of Northern Ireland's political leaders have fulfilled the wish of those they represent. One in particular has been tireless. John Hume's quest for peace has spanned the period of the present troubles. We have become used to his belief that it is possible to bring the divided people of the island brought together. He wrote in this newspaper (before the current talks):

"What is generally referred to as nationalist Ireland has made it clear that it is the people of Ireland who are divided, not the territory. A divided people can only be brought together by agreement. Any coercion cannot hope to succeed. Not only does the peace process pose no threat to Unionism, it is the best possible way for the Unionist people to secure their future. Relying on the protection of their identity by a British government they do not trust seems to me a less successful recipe than accepting the challenge of trusting themselves to come to an agreement with the people with whom they share a piece of earth."

The Northern Ireland settlement is not the conception or the property of one man, but one could be forgiven for seeing in the it the Hume model of peace. But it may carry with it one of the weaknesses in another part of Mr Hume's approach – the faith in the prospect of a "total and complete cessation of violence".

Let us be clear. Now that the "peace process" is indeed a "peace settlement" it is not naive to be optimistic about its prospects. But nor, sadly, should we be absolutist – last night's events will not automatically mean a permanent and complete cessation of all violence. It is close to a mat-



ter of fact that the agreement will not mean the end of terrorism. It may well reinforce the split in the Provisional IRA. There are certainly those within its ranks who will be readily convinced that they have been sold out and that they must keep up the "armed struggle". The so-called Continuity IRA and the 32 County Sovereignty Committee are unlikely to be joining in the celebrations today.

There will also be a hard-line ramp on the Unionist side who will also feel aggrieved. They too are capable of cowardly sectarian murders of "soft targets". Neither group will be as strong as their predecessors but they will be successful in generating terrorism, albeit at a lower pitch.

There will be a level of violence which is not tolerable but which will have to be tolerated, endured. In other words there will be cold, calculated, measured outrages geared to undermining the settlement and escalating hatred and tensions. It is a tactic that the IRA have employed in the past and they have a description of it – they call it "strictly modulated military activity". Republicanism and Unionism's hard-liners have a vested and mutual interest in seeing an escalation of their violence wreck the settlement. There will be plenty more examples of the kind of scenes we saw the other night when a mob led by Ian Paisley tried to force their way into Stormont. Dr Paisley's actions will be followed by further rallies and attempts, even by leading members of Mr Trimble's own Ulster Unionists, to portray David Trimble as a traitor ("flandy" in the local parlance). Paisley has made his political living from outflanking mainstream Unionist leaders, from Captain Terence O'Neill to Brian Faulkner and now, Mr Trimble.

What should the response be to the political and other challenges?

We must all resist the temptation to see future violence described as a failure of the peace process. People in both parts of Ireland need to keep faith. They will soon be given opportunities to express their support for what their leaders have set up. In fact things will proceed almost as fast as the talks were slow. The twin referendums will be held in a few weeks' time and the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly will follow in June.

We hope that no party will now practise "abstentionism" and employ one of the oldest of Irish tactics, the boycott. Mr Blair and the other parties to the agreement may have calculated that the less time those opposed to the deal have, the better. They are right to hurry things along. By the end of the year Ireland should be making a unique political experiment work, and the approach will set an example to some of the other troubled parts of the world. Indeed, one day, if the hard men are marginalised, Ireland's "new politics" may work as naturally as day following night.

Britannia in soundbites

AS I was wandering around the powerhouse:uk exhibition, the Department of Trade and Industry's export showcase (premiered in "Britain's export showcase is hot air", 27 March), I could not help but notice that the tourists all seemed to be on the other side of Horse Guards Arch photographing soldiers on horseback.

I applaud Nigel Coates's refreshingly innovative building, set like a jewel on Horse Guards Parade. But it is let down badly by both the childish pomposity of the displays, which hide amongst them some first-class products and designs, and by our national inability to treat customers or visitors properly.

This latest manifestation of Cool Britannia was killed by the person who insisted that powerhouse:uk be surrounded by cheap galvanised fencing, PortaKabins and parked contractors' vehicles. Such ignorance is so often allowed to spoil our best efforts.

An even greater worry is that we are in danger of polarising the national debate between Cool Britannia and what could be called traditional Britain. If this happens there will no longer be any talk of quality, and it is quality at which we excel. Quality in the performing arts, music, fashion, industrial design, engineering, architecture and also traditional ceremonial is where we lead the world.

Sadly, where we trail many other countries is in engendering a culture which admits all this, and allows it to be celebrated equally. To have all that we have, and to throw part of it away for the sake of a fleeting polemic is to sell our souls.

I care passionately about Britannia, both cool and otherwise. I do not particularly care what we do, but whatever it is, let us do it well. And let us not edit our national heritage for the sake of a soundbite. Because when it is gone, it is gone forever and whatever is left is all that is left, and it had better be worth having.

DOMINIC REID
Pageantmaster
The Lord Mayor's Show,
Hereford

The right to die

HUGH THOMSON (letter, 9 April) asserts that in the Netherlands the three people per day whose lives are ended are "killed without consent". He takes the figure from the Rummelink Report of 1990. But half those people had already asked for euthanasia if their suffering became unbearable, most had only a few hours or days to live and the decision was discussed with other doctors, nurses and relatives. The figure remained the same when the study was repeated in 1995. There has been no "slippery slope".

How many such deaths does he suppose occur in Britain? We have no means of knowing, since here there has never been a comprehensive study of death and dying comparable with the Rummelink Report. The incidence of distressing deaths is likely to be similar in such closely neighbouring countries. Smaller studies in Britain have revealed that doctors help the dying to have a more merciful death here too, but they have to do it furtively. This is where the possibility of abuse arises, not in the openly shared decision-making now legally practised in the Netherlands.

JEAN DAVIES
President, European Division
World Federation of Right to
Die Societies
Oxford

DR PHIL HAMMOND fails to explain (7 April) exactly why he thinks only people with incurable and/or progressive conditions are to be taken at their word when they say they want to die.

No doctor, surely, could kill an able-bodied patient he felt had a life worth living, simply because that person expressed a wish to die – any more than any of us would give a person threatening to jump from a tower block a hefty push, because the only relevant consideration was that they had said repeatedly that they wanted to die. The doctor has to agree with the patient's hopelessness about their life before he can terminate that life.

Dr Hammond stresses that he is



A 'jewel' on Horse Guards Parade: the Powerhouse UK exhibition in London

Photograph: Chris Sharp

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

talking only of "voluntary" euthanasia: the truth is that he would accept only some "volunteers". Euthanasia is yet another way in which a common prejudice is put into practice – the distorted view that says sick people are right to want to die and are "better off dead".

ALISON DAVIS
Blandford Forum, Dorset

End of the Wrens

YOUR coverage of the "officer and the Wren" case, and your earlier reporting of the appointment of the first two female officers in the Royal Navy to command ships has contained a consistent flaw. The "Wrens" (Women's Royal Naval Service) no longer exist. They were abolished in 1992.

The use of the term "Wren" is il-

logical: the whole point of abolishing the WRNS as a separate service was so that women could do the same jobs as men in the Navy.

The most junior female ratings are still known as "Wrens" for historic reasons. But female officers in the Royal Navy are not. They wear the same gold sleeve lace as their male counterparts, rather than the old Wren blue stripes. And if Karen Pearce were still a Wren, she would be a First Officer. Not a Lieutenant Commander.

CHRIS BELLAMY

London W3

I WAS interested to read the poem "written by Lt Col Pople" in your account of the sex scandal court martial ("Colonel is cleared in Wren case", 10 April). In fact, it is identical to Robert Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes", except for the

name-change to "Karen" and leaving out the difficult words, thus creating the nonsensical line, "Then methinks how sweetly the sheen of her clothes" out of "Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows / The liquefaction of her clothes".

Fortunately, plagiarism is not, I think, a court martial offence.
RON SIMPSON
Pontefract, West Yorkshire

Life after death

PAUL HANDLEY'S "Arguments for Easter" (7 April) tells us that "the weight of the evidence... indicates that Jesus the Nazarene lived in Palestine between c 4 BCE and c 33 BCE".

If so, he died some 29 years before he was born. A miracle indeed!
ERIC THOMPSON
London NW2

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"I know that women find it hard to hold their tongues." — The Rev Ian Paisley, silencing a female reporter who dared to interrupt him in mid-flow during a press conference.

"Ian Paisley – he's been thrown out of more places than Alex Higgins." — David Irvine, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party.

"She would say that, wouldn't she." — Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin president, on Mo Mowlam's positive assessment of the chances for success of the peace talks.

"David [Trimble] was close to Blair all right, but it's like taking paracetamol. One a day is okay, but this is being asked to swallow 40 at a go." — A senior unionist, speaking about the draft settlement document.

"I sensed a little aloofness. But as soon as he found out that my brother was Prime Minister he immediately treated me as an equal, a truly aristocratic gnome." — Terry Major-Ball, describing an encounter with a fellow enthusiast at a garden gnome convention in New Zealand.

"I will be sending every member of the England football squad an inscribed book of inspirational thoughts, which will be tailored, a mere three-inches-square, to slip under their shin-pads." — Uri Geller, spoon-bender.

"To unbug the millennium, back to the quill pen, say I. Cheap to replace and far fewer clever human input errors." — David Williams, of Evesham, in a letter to The Independent.

Women behaving badly

MARJORIE WILLIAMS purports to reveal some ugly truths about feminism ("How Bill Clinton neutered the feminist movement", 4 April) but chooses the wrong target. Whatever may be the truth about President Clinton's sexual conduct, it is a question of compliance with his immorality – something that it was in his accusers' power to withhold if they chose to.

If their accusations are true, the President – like many of his predecessors in office – took advantage of his power and position in a childish way, while the women concerned gave in to equally instinctive impulses in complying – both morally reprehensible and both easy to understand given our animal natures. If women are morally and intellectually equal to men, though in some respects physically weaker, they are equally responsible for whatever transactions pass between them.

For a woman to use sexual attractiveness to get on in the world is no better nor worse than for a man to use his position to exact sexual favours. Women cannot have it all ways; and in so far as they attempt to do so, they are likely to be subject to the very kind of male attitudes which they complain about. The equivalent to manly chivalry is womanly decorum.

JOHN A DAVIS
Cambridge

Hoax on the hoaxers?

PRESUMABLY the Joseph Crabtree mentioned by Bryan Bennett of the Crabtree Foundation (letter, 10 April) is the of "Crabtree's Bludgeon", "the fictitious character [created] 44 Christmases ago, as a joke on the literary fraternity" (I quote from A B Sainsbury's supplement to the obituary of Professor R V Jones, printed in the Independent on 24 December 1997).

As an undergraduate in the mid-Fifties, I sat in R V's most illuminating and informative Natural Philosophy lectures at the University of Aberdeen. Particularly enjoyable were his descriptions of practical jokes and hoaxes of which he was aware, and had in some instances perpetrated.

It would be a delightful postscript to R V's practical joking career if Crabtree were real and was in fact R V's hoax on his co-hoaxers, his "crimies at the Athenaeum". Perhaps such "proofs" as the Crabtree Foundation possess would enable a decision to be made between the two versions of the hoax?

J RUSSELL
Fleet, Hampshire

King's fight for the poor

MARTIN LUTHER KING was not in Memphis in April 1968 to support "black sanitation workers" (report, 4 April). In fact, he was there as part of the Poor People's Campaign of 1968, publicising the plight of all low-paid workers, and other people in poverty.

He was killed at a time of great creativity in his life, a time when he was realising that the root of the problems facing America lay not in the denial of legal rights to black people, but in the growing division between rich and poor. He was also just beginning a campaign against the Vietnam war.

WYN DAVIES
Bury Port, Dyfed

A private affair

THERE is something tyrannical about the tone of John Lytle's article on George Michael ("Why it's been a bad week for homosexuals", 9 April) and its underlying assumption that he should have come out ages ago and in effect has a duty to the gay community to do so.

George Michael's sexuality is his own private affair and the business only of himself and those he chooses to sleep with (his alleged breaking of the law is another matter). Didn't the gay movement set out precisely to liberate people from prejudice and oppressive, moralising intrusion?
SUSANNAH PERRY
London E5

LETTER from THE EDITOR

IN Rosie's absence on a well-earned holiday in Normandy, I've had the pleasure of occupying the editor's chair these past few days. Pleasure is the wrong word: it has been a delight, not least because this has been one of those occasions when you feel privileged to have been a journalist, to have been a witness to history being made, to have brought momentous events into people's homes.

I refer, of course to Ulster – not to the "Colonel and the Wren" case, which judging from some of our rivals' acres of coverage on Friday morning, was more significant than the nail-biting negotiations in Stormont.

On Thursday, with the deadline for the talks only hours away, I decided to devote most of the front page and pages two and three to Ulster. I could have gone in another direction and pumped up other stories. In which case, what would they be? George Michael? The Wren? Interesting and certainly entertaining, but not for the front – not for The Independent. Down the years of reporting the Troubles, in David McKitterick we have been blessed with the finest commentator. Our Ulster coverage has always been second to none.

Our rivals stood back. While we ear-marked pages one, two and three, come what may, they appeared less certain. Their solution, reflected in their early editions, was to give over mass-

es of space to the Wren and to other light stories, which presumably, had there been a deal in Ulster, would have drastically diminished as the night went on.

But I felt that even without a deal, Ulster was still the only real story in town and would dominate Good Friday.

"Without a deal" – those were the words that haunted me on Thursday night. We had until 2am, when we finally closed the paper, to get the message right. But what could we say that would survive the morning? What if, God forbid, there was a deal at 2.05am? Did we want an upbeat or downbeat picture on the front page? Imagine if the talks collapsed suddenly at 4am and our newspaper came thudding through letter boxes a few hours later bearing an optimistic headline and a smiling Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern? It did not bear thinking about.

I confess, we sat on the fence. After rejecting an excellent picture of Blair, looking haggard and sleep-deprived, on the basis that his appearance would instantly change if a deal was struck and morning television viewers might see a beaming Prime Minister on their screens in sharp contrast to our instantly dated, sombre portrait, I was all set to go with a picture of Belfast children raising their hands in "V for Victory" signs.

It was a good picture that signified the aspirations and innocence of future generations. But we could be horribly wrong. Would those same children still be feeling victorious on Good Friday morning if the talks had fallen apart in the small hours after we had put the paper to bed?

Then, on the Picture Editor's screen, I spotted a snap of Blair and Mo Mowlam together, inside Stormont. They were sitting in a negotiating room, the table littered with the debris of hours of discussion: papers, mineral water bottle, six tea-cups, milk jug, salt and pepper pots. It was an intimate shot that took us behind the news, inside Stormont. Fortunately they were neither smiling nor gloomy, just focused and serious.

That was the picture. Then, the headline, "Eyes of the world on Ulster" – not dramatic enough, I liked, "Up to the wire and beyond", but it could look stale if a deal was struck by the time the paper landed. "Ireland's hope for a new dawn" – strong, reflects both a sense of moment and a mood of expectation, and afforded some protection if the whole process broke down. That was the headline. That was the paper on the day Ulster had a peace settlement.

CHRIS BLACKHURST, Deputy Editor



Did the third class passengers on the Titanic have a fair chance?



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
WHEN THE EVIDENCE
FITS THE PREJUDICE

It was, of course, the tenacity, skill and patience of John Major/Tony Blair (Mo Mowlam/Bill Clinton which brought about yesterday's Ulster settlement, and put an end to thirty years of terrorism/warpointless violence. History will judge this to have been the moment when diehard unionists/republicans gave up their obstinate insistence on a united Ireland/British Ulster, and allowed the guns to be put away.

One always has a choice. Of restaurants, spouses, garden furniture, newspapers and, above all, of histories. You can pick whichever suits you best, the one that sets off your eyes, the one that goes with the curtains, the one with the most complete sports coverage, or – in the case of history – the one that seems best to validate the views that you currently hold.

Take the Titanic. My inherited version of the 1912 disaster had it cast as a wonderfully rich and vivid illustration of the class struggle. In Walter Lord's *A Night To Remember*, Lady Cosmo Duff Gordon – whose party occupied an entire lifeboat (number 1) to themselves – turned to her secretary, Miss Francatelli as the Titanic finally went down, and said: "There is your beautiful night-dress gone." And there too went the three Skoog children, the four young Paulsons and the eleven members of the Sage family. All in third class, and all beneath the notice of this latter-day Marie Antoinette. Worse, they were locked out of the lifeboats so that the rich might live while the poor died.

This is not a view of history that would suit, say, the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. For him, the class system was never so callous as that. It might confer privilege, but it also demanded responsibility to those who were poor or who laboured on your behalf.

So it must have been nice to have been able to run the headline in Thursday's edition, *Titanic victims were not locked below*. Taking the latest Oscar winning film to task, the *Telegraph* revealed that papers

on display at a new exhibition at the Public Records Office proved that "the scene in which third-class passengers are locked below decks is a myth". A passenger called Pickard is documented as having said that those in steerage "were not prevented from getting up to the upper decks by anybody or by locked doors or by anything else."

Joy, then. But the figures are awkward. As the *Telegraph* admits, in first class over a third of the men, almost all of the women and all the children survived. In second it was less than 10 per cent of the men, 84 per cent of the women and all the children. But in steerage 12 per cent of the men, 55 per cent of the women and less than one in three of the children survived. Interrogating the figures shows that – despite the strict "women and children first" policy – a greater proportion of first class men survived, than of third class children.

Strangely, the documents quoted by the *Telegraph* contain observations by another steerage passenger called Buckley, arguing that "the passengers in third class had as much chance as the first and second class passengers". But how can this circle be squared? How, if they had just as much chance, did so many more of them contrive to be drowned? Simple, says the *Telegraph*. "More of the first class passengers survived because their cabins were closer to the lifeboats [just as much chance?] and many of the emigrants in third class died because their poor English meant they did not understand what was happening."

This Tiltan observation – with its suggestion that had the boat gone down in Swedish, then more would have been saved – seems somehow deficient. And other evidence states that there were many barriers between steerage and the rest of the ship, and that most of them stayed up. In addition some third-class passengers were denied initial access to the boats by sailors who forbade them to enter the first-class area. These included three Irish girls, and – curiously – Mr Buckley himself.

These facts, of course, do not really justify the American Hollywood myth of the deliberate lock-out, which is the version of history preferred both by vulgar old Marxists and vulgar new Meritocrats. But they certainly don't do much for *no-blesse oblige*.

So, if the *Telegraph* chose to puncture the "myth" of the way that class decided who lived and who died on the Titanic, what might the liberal *Guardian* discover at the very same exhibition? *Titanic's owners tried to gag filmmakers*, that's what. Shipping companies apparently put pressure on cinema chains in a bid to "suppress material which might frighten away passengers". Just before the second world war, says the *Guardian*, the British Chamber of Commerce demanded that the Board of Trade stop Alfred Hitchcock making a film about the Titanic. Furthermore, the *Guardian* reminds us, the exhibition shows that the British Foreign Office secretly pleaded with US President William Taft to ensure that a senatorial enquiry into the sinking exonerated the British Board of Trade. The issue was one of censorship, cover-up and collusion in high places.

So, OED. The same exhibition based on the same historical disaster that happened 76 years ago this week, and two national papers with two entirely different stories, both of which act to reinforce the current opinions and prejudices of their readers. All of whom can wear "Validated By History" stamps on their foreheads.

Now is the time to praise the work of democratic politicians



ANDREW
MARR

ON HOW THE
PEACE IS WON

GOOD FRIDAY, indeed. Yesterday was special – a day which asked cynics to take another look and made pessimists seem suddenly boring. A day which gave a good answer to the old question: "Mummy, what are politicians for?" A day which conjured a generous vision out of small minds.

So before plunging back into the grey media river of ifs and buts and the reverses and disappointments to come, it is worth standing back and simply enjoying the event. All political systems need days like these. I heard the news with a shudder of excitement in a Highland Hotel. People were asking each other about the news and smiling. In churches around the country this weekend people will be celebrating and praying – "Let's hope". And in pubs, cafes and millions of kitchens there will be a murmuring of "Well, you never know", and "Humm. Could be."

This uncommon mood which steals out at some election results, or whether Mandela is released, or at the first IRA ceasefire or a Camp David handshake, cannot be defined or measured. But it is the vital spirit of democracy: if there isn't some hope of making the world better through representative politics, then the system itself begins to rot away.

You could tell the politicians themselves felt some of this – felt, in Tony Blair's phrase "The hand of history". The fact that it was the pursued familiar faces of Ulster hardman who were expressing hope and openness made the breakthrough particularly poignant. To hear Sinn Féin's Mitchell McLaughlin herald "A beautiful day" or David Irvine of the DUP pinching himself and trilling, "I never thought in my life time I would see it", was superbly surreal but undeniably moving too.

The over night political melodrama of this final phase of negotiation was evidently essential to the deal. Without the ticking clock set off by senator George Mitchell's deadline – yet another Northern Ireland time bomb, but one that could only be defused by about a thousand fingers working simultaneously – there wouldn't

have been the agreement. I suspect that in those final exhausted hours a few closed minds were prized open, or at least open enough.

It was a heavy, dark, tobacco and coffee-stained seam of mental shuffling, phase-rubbing and deal cutting which will be mined for pithy memoirs and pub anecdotes for years ahead – the moment when Clinton reached John Hume in the refreshment pen; the moment so-and-so burst into tears; the bad joke that broke the worst atmosphere ... But this drama

All of us in the UK are living in a slightly different country than the one we had grown used to

was, only the culmination of a much longer process, composed of ten thousand minute acts of moral courage on the part of a bewilderingly diverse number of people, many of them anonymous and some of them very unpleasant indeed.

One well known man who should be particularly remembered this morning is John Major who seized an IRA offer and began this initiative, to much ridicule at Westminster. He didn't have a big majority. He was leading a unionist party. In many years, his position could hardly have been weaker. Major and Paddy Mayhew would not, I think, have been able to bring things to this point had the Tories, by some magic, won the last election. By the end of that administration the pressure on it was showing and the Northern Ireland peace process

needed the fresh authority and energy of Tony Blair's victory to bring it alive again. It needed the big Westminster majority and the knowledge that the new British administration wasn't going away but would be in power for years to come. But without Major and his doggedness and in the mid-1990s, there would have been nothing for New Labour to pick up.

Like John Major, Tony Blair has been heavily involved in his first few days in office. His arrival at Hillsborough this week wasn't a PR stunt by a grand-

Cabinet and is certainly now the most important female politician in the country.

Bertie Ahern and David Andrews have done exceptionally well, keeping the faith: but they will inevitably be standing in the shadow of John Hume, a good man vindicated, and Gerry Adams, a less good man who is visibly changing. We may not like Adams but then we are not required to like any of these characters: and what we can say is that the Sinn Féin leader, fully aware of the historic fate of Republicans who con-

could never deal and a modern politician who can – and in a way, between the 17th Century and our own. Trimble has shown exceptional courage too in handling a divided party, boiling with would-be replacements. Some of this behaviour in the last few days made one despair but in the end he did the right thing, and as the likely leader of a future Northern Ireland assembly he will be tested and challenged constantly in the years ahead.

The referendum and the elections offer plenty of scope now for the wreckers. There will be splinterings and denunciations and no doubt killings to come as the cave dwellers come out for a final bloody dance of protest. But here is where the rest of the country, politicians, journalists and voters, can also play a part. We must not fall into the easy reaction of questioning the whole process every time a bomb explodes or an inoffensive drinker is murdered in a back street bar.

It would be childish to expect a clean or uncomplicated move from low intensity war to genuine peace. Now, none of us can afford to be cynics and none of us can afford to be children. There will be less trouble then there would have been before these past extraordinary days. As of this weekend, all of us in the UK are living in a slightly different country than the one we had grown used to. A better one? Well, obviously.

Easter, Passover, Eid – suppose they were true



SARA
MAITLAND
ON THE USES
OF BELIEF

BANK HOLIDAY week-end again. Some traditions never die – for instance the weather is dire and the motorways are completely jammed. But one great Easter tradition has vanished: the Bishop of Durham no longer makes a provocative sermon challenging the meaning of Easter, and insisting that the whole original point of this holiday, the resurrection of Jesus, has been misunderstood. It is about more than "a conjuring tricks with pigs' bones", the phrase that launched a thousand editorials. Like all traditions this annual event had a ritual pattern: the declaration was followed by a traditional dance of shock and outrage performed by media pundits, the Bishop's colleagues and anyone else who wanted to join in. After that, we had a ritual discussion about the role of religion in a multi-cultural secular democracy. After that an opinion poll revealed that 73.7 per cent of the population believed in God, but only about two per cent did anything about it. Then we could all return to real business – the ap-

palling weather and the deficiencies of the M25.

Perhaps it was a useful tradition. Without this annual event there is no religious news. But religion continues – this weekend it is not just Christians who have a key festival. Four of Britain's major religions have important celebrations this week: It is Jewish Passover (the celebration of their freedom from Egypt) Moslem Eid (the Feast of Lights) and, of course, the great feast of the Easter Bunny worshippers (who are unquestionably winning the fight of faith). WH Smith has ten cards to honour this cult for every one with any Christian iconography.

Anthropologists would have no problems interpreting these festivals as fertility rituals linked to the renewal of spring time, the return of the sun, the annual crop pattern, are pervasive in all non-tropical cultures. But for the rest of us there is a question to be asked because we are privileged "faith". Most blatantly Britain privileges Christianity – and primarily a Lutheran-Erastian version of it called Angli-

cism. National holidays – and the word itself is just short hand for Holy Days – are organised around the Christian calendar. We allow bishops to influence legislation. We require our heads of state to manage their sexual activities around Christian moral codes. But more fundamentally we privilege religion over secularism, theism over

If we believe religion is true, we should be reintroducing a criminal penalty for those who fail to attend church on Sunday

atheism. This is most marked in education: we have finally given state funding to a Moslem school, but rationalists, humanists and materialists have no safe space where their family values and traditions can be maintained and succoured.

One could of course argue that this is a conservationist issue; under the contemporary tide of secular rationalism we

and provide special attention. But this is a flimsy argument: taken world-wide, faith is not in the least endangered and virulent strains of it are alive and well and reeking social havoc, more like a virus than like the giant panda.

The Bishop of Durham pressed the issue – what do we mean by belief in God? Is it True? Is it metaphorical? Is it a personal habit that some

believers need all the help we can get; we are an endangered species. Scientific fundamentalists openly preach that their measure of truth is the only one; and that the absence of proof (as defined by them) must be treated as proof of absence. In the interests of the social equivalence of bio-diversity it makes good sense to support benign habitats of us enjoy? Personally I would want to say that I believe in Christianity as I believe in the world revolving round the sun: that I believe in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, carpenter and God, exactly as I believe in World War II. But actually I don't, because when I encounter someone who for example denies the reality of the Holocaust I endeavour to correct them and tend to like them less for their convictions. Meanwhile I completely understand why non-believers disagree with me. I rarely try to persuade anyone, and by and large prefer rationalists to my fellow believers. My faith is more along the lines that "it is true that I love my children". I see absolutely no reason why anyone should accord me social privileges because of that, and certainly they should not have to organise their long weekends around my children's birthdays.

We are in a social mess on this issue. If as a culture (not as individuals) we do not believe in religion, we should not be privileging those who do: we should not be insisting

that children are inculcated with it at school, and we should arrange our national holidays around weather, convenience and the transport system. If we believe it is metaphorical then we should treat it like any other cultural society, from the Arts Council to the village amateur dramatic club. If we believe it is literally true we should be reintroducing a criminal penalty for those who fail to attend church on a Sunday for their own long term good.

The point is that a belief system, or faith, which has no consequences in the real world is shabby at best, and dangerous at worst. This may be the biggest fault with the Easter Bunny cult – it flavours anything we feel like doing with a mixture of sentiment and smugness without challenging our minds or our morals. If on the other hand the pressure of Easter, of a narrative of resurrection, repentance and forgiveness weighs even slightly in the balance between peace and violence, say in Christian Northern Ireland this weekend, then we may have to recognise another sort of truth.

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Japan Bank punishes 98 over scandal

By our financial staff

THE BANK of Japan yesterday disciplined 98 staff in an attempt to recover public trust and close the book on the worst financial scandal in its history.

The punishments were meted out following a two-month internal investigation sparked by the arrest of a senior BoJ official accused of giving out confidential information in exchange for lavish entertainment, mainly by private banks.

The official, Yasuyuki Yoshizawa, the then head of the capital markets division, was fired after being indicted two weeks ago on charges of accepting bribes of about ¥4.5m from the Industrial Bank of Japan (IBJ) and Sanwa Bank over four years from May 1993.

Yasuo Matsushita, governor of the BoJ, resigned last month to take responsibility for the scandal.

Among those punished yesterday were two executive directors and three advisers to the governor. The five will give up 20 per cent of their pay for one to five months.

The BoJ's new governor, Masaru Hayami, his deputy governors and four other executive directors also decided to give up 20 per cent of one month's salary "to show regret and determination to restore the bank's credibility", the BoJ added in a statement.

The investigation asked employees to volunteer information on contacts over the past five years, focusing on illegal acts as well as the frequency and manner of contacts.

The investigation did not find employees broke the law, but it revealed that some officials leaked confidential information with the approval of Mr Yoshizawa.

None of the BoJ officials investigated

pressed financial firms to entertain them or forced private firms to pay for winning and the dining, it said. They also were not given special favours, such as discounts on golf course memberships.

But almost all received some entertainment, with some agreeing the entertainment was excessive.

"There is a need to establish a new style on how BoJ staff come in contact with financial firms and the markets, as Japan is about to go through a major revolution in its financial and asset markets," the bank said. "We would like to take this opportunity to remind all of our employees thoroughly about this."

A senior bank official told reporters that the internal investigation showed there had been no institutionalised leakage of sensitive information by central bank officials.

The bank began the internal investigation of about 600 management staff in February. Japanese media reports say staff used their own slang to describe entertaining private firms. A "splash" involved a ¥20,000 dinner while a "plunge" could mean a ¥100,000 dinner.

The scandal has also led to a clean-up of ethics among private banks. Asahi Bank said yesterday it would cut the salaries of its chairman and president by 30 per cent for three months to take responsibility for the bank's involvement in the scandal.

Sanwa Bank, Sumitomo Bank and the Industrial Bank of Japan have already announced cuts in the salaries of their chairmen, presidents and other executives.

The Ministry of Finance has also been caught up in a similar scandal. Earlier this year, two officials were arrested on suspicion of receiving bribes from big banks in exchange for confidential information.



Tokyo yesterday: The Bank of Japan is thought to have sold \$5bn in an attempt to strengthen the yen

Markets give thumbs-down to Hashimoto fiscal package

By Michael Harrison

THE FINANCIAL markets yesterday gave the thumbs-down to Japan's economic stimulus package, forcing the country's central bank to intervene massively on the foreign exchanges to prop up the yen for a second day running.

Dealers said that the Bank of Japan had sold up to \$5bn to try to knock the dollar back. At one point the dollar was down by more than four yen at ¥127.4 but it rallied later in the day to close a shade below ¥129.

The Nikkei index of leading shares also felt the strain, falling by 1.5 per cent at one point as doubts grew about whether the gov-

ernment's package of tax cuts would prove decisive enough. It rallied to close down 55.54 points, or 0.34 per cent, at 16,481.12.

It was the second day in succession that the BoJ had intervened to defend the yen following the announcement of the long-awaited ¥10 trillion (£45bn) package of measures to reflate the economy. On Thursday the BoJ is estimated to have intervened in the New York currency markets, selling up to \$2bn.

Spirits were lifted slightly by an indication from the Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto that he may ask the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to make the tax cut announced this week a permanent fixture. "I have said that I will ask the tax

panels of the LDP and the government to discuss the issue soon," he added.

But the mood of optimism was tempered by another downbeat assessment of the economy from Japan's Economic Planning Agency. In its monthly report the agency said: "Consumer and corporate sentiment, which worsened last year, are affecting all of the real economy. The economy is stagnant and conditions are becoming worse."

The report added that the economic stimulus package, likely to total more than ¥10 trillion, would have a significant impact. Employment conditions were having a considerable impact on spending habits and that was something to be considered when thinking of how to boost consumption.

C&W raises £400m in French sell-off

By Michael Harrison

CABLE & WIRELESS is to raise about £400m by selling its 20 per cent stake in the French mobile telephone operator Bouygues Telecom. The move could also presage a new alliance between C&W and the Italian telephone company.

The disposal of the stake in Bouygues Telecom is part of C&W's strategy of withdrawing from ventures where it has minority holdings or lacks management control. Last November it announced plans to raise £1bn in the next 12 months from asset sales, since when the market has speculated on where its holding in Bouygues Telecom might end up.

C&W said it was exploring opportunities with Telecom Italia for co-operation in their respective international networks. C&W is strong in the UK, US and Caribbean while Telecom Italia has a bigger presence in mainland Europe and Latin America.

Telecom Italia refuted suggestions that its planned link-up with C&W threatened its proposed alliance with AT&T of the US.

The Italian company reached a preliminary accord last year with AT&T and the European telecoms consortium Unisource to form a global strategic alliance. But AT&T's representative on the board of Telecom Italia resigned unexpectedly, after which Telecom Italia's chairman, Gian Mario Rossignolo, said it time to re-evaluate the accord.

A spokesman said however: "The alliance with C&W does not exclude the alliance with AT&T. The two things are separate. Our negotiations with AT&T will continue."

Indonesia begins reform

INDONESIA yesterday unveiled sweeping reforms designed to end the country's financial crisis. The package, put together after three weeks of talks with the International Monetary Fund, includes measures to modernise its bankruptcy and mergers laws, tackle its \$74bn of private foreign debt, privatise state enterprises and restructure its banking sector. The rupiah strengthened on news of the deal, rising from 8,000 to 7,750 against the dollar. Analysts reacted cautiously, saying they needed to be convinced that the Jakarta government was serious about implementing the reforms.

Surplus soars

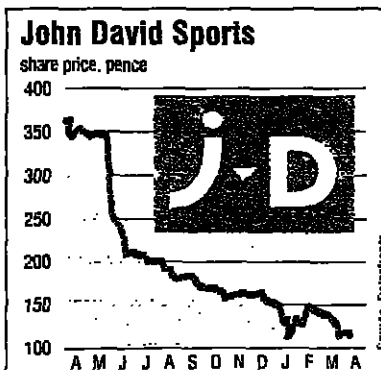
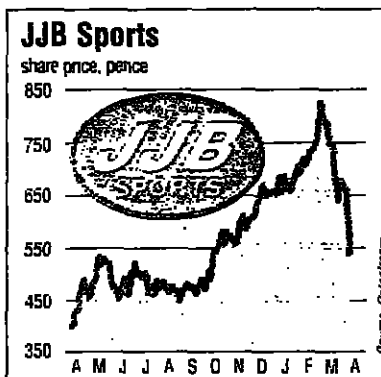
THE SURGING US economy could push the federal budget to a surplus of at least \$50bn this year, according to internal Federal Reserve estimates. Some Wall Street analysts believe it could reach as much as \$75bn. This will be the first time that the US government has spent less money than it raises in taxes for 30 years.

Dassault move

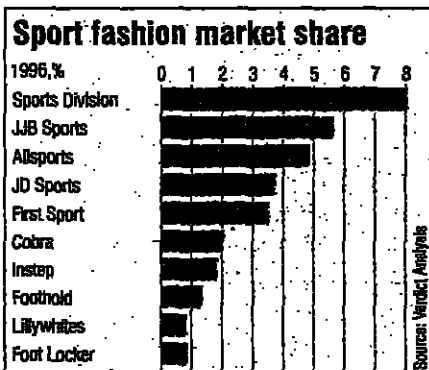
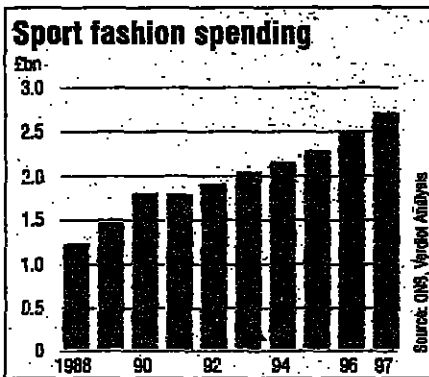
THE FRENCH government is expected to transfer its 46 per cent stake in the combat aircraft maker Dassault Aviation to the state-owned Aerospatiale, according to reports in Paris. The transfer is part of the government's plan to strengthen its domestic defence industry in preparation for the proposed link-up with British Aerospace and Daimler Benz Aerospace of Germany. The transfer would let Aerospatiale negotiate on equal terms with BAE and DASA although BAE has made clear that it believes the continued state ownership is the biggest hurdle to a pan-European consolidation.

China air war

OVER-CAPACITY and increased competition from road and rail transport are forcing China's domestic airlines into a price war to fill seats. Many of China's 34 domestic airlines have slashed prices or offered discounts to passengers after a drop in air traffic since 1993, the state news agency Xinhua reported.



Angela Corrigan, ex-member of the all-girl pop group Bombshell, in Nike trainers. Analysts wonder if the sportswear market is about to bomb



Adios Adidas. The sportswear fad may be going out of fashion

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

CONCERNS are growing in the City about the performance of the sports retail sector as analysts question whether the branded sportswear boom has passed its peak. Their fears follow sharp falls in the share prices of some of the publicly quoted sports store chains such as JJB Sports and Blacks Leisure in recent weeks. The shares have been hit by concerns over weak trading, an over-supplied market and suggestions that fashion trends may be moving away from top brands such as Nike, Adidas and Reebok.

"The sector has been looking shaky for a while and with the amount of new space being added, any slackening of demand is bound to affect profitability," one analyst said. Clive Vaughan of Verdier retail consultants agreed, saying: "This does look a bit like a bubble that is very close to bursting. There is nervousness out there at the moment and though we can see consumer demand growing, the amount of new space the retailers are adding can only end in tears."

There were suggestions late last week that some of the sports chains were

suffering double-digit declines in like for like sales. It is understood that trading was particularly weak in February but may have picked up in March.

It is now almost certain that Sports Division, the privately-owned sports retailer, will postpone its £350m stock market flotation which had been planned for the spring. A final decision will be made after JJB Sports reports its full year results on 22 April.

Investor confidence has been shaken by a series of negative announcements from the sector in the last six weeks. Nike issued a profits warning in March after problems in the US and the Far East. Also last month the former merchandising director of Manchester United said the boom in replica football shirts may be over. Newcastle United added to the woes when some of its directors were alleged to have made comments about replica shirts being over-priced.

A bigger concern is the possibility of a shift in fashion tastes. The popularity of training shoes has been affected by the rise of the "brown shoe" market which includes brands like Timberland, Rockport and Caterpillar. Even the previously un-trendy Clarks shoes have been popularised by rock bands such as Oasis and The Verve,

who wear the company's desert boots and Wallabees shoes.

There is also evidence that more formal clothing may be rising in popularity at the expense of heavily branded sportswear. At the company's results last week, Rowland Gee, managing director of Moss Bros, the menswear retailer said: "It is Adios Adidas. People just don't think it is as trendy to wear sports labels for fashion any more."

Verdier's Mr Vaughan agrees that in the same age groups, a Ben Sherman shirt is more likely to be the new "must have" fashion item. He warns that companies such as Nike are sitting on mountains of unsold stock and the fashion appeal of owning a pair of its trainers will be eroded if stores are forced to reduce prices. "The whole point of these brands is that they supposed to be aspirational. If suddenly an £80 pair of Nike trainers is re-moulded down to a tenner, street-wise young kids won't buy them."

He says that after years of ignoring traditional shoe shops, the top brands like Nike have started to "knock on their doors" asking if they would like to start stocking their goods.

The appeal of these brands is also being under-mined by supermarket groups selling sports clothing and

trainers at cut prices after securing supplies on the "grey market". Tesco has cut the price of Levi's jeans and Nike trainers in recent months. It is selling Tommy Hilfiger clothing at reduced rates, including a T-shirt for £15 which it said was £25 in Selfridges.

Tesco says it is not planning to enter the sports market but is securing the supplies as part of its campaign against selective distribution. Brands like Levi's and Nike have refused to supply supermarkets saying their store environments and lack of specialist staff makes them unsuitable outlets.

However, it would be premature to write the sports brands off completely. They are backed by huge advertising campaigns and replica shirts are unlikely to fall out of favour dramatically given the rising popularity of football and the continued backing of Sky TV.

And then there is France '98 in June. As Mr Vaughan of Verdier says: "There has been a bit of slippage in the market but we still have the World Cup to come and marketing for that; has not even started yet."

For the sports retailers, a strong World Cup challenge by England, or even a sustained run by Scotland, would be seen as the hand of God.

Administrators shut 50 Fosters shops

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

ADMINISTRATORS to Fosters Trading, the menswear retailer which collapsed last month, are to close 50 of the group's stores with the loss of up to 400 jobs. The move is part of a rationalisation programme designed to stabilise the company before it can be offered for sale.

Further closures among the chain's 175 outlets cannot be ruled out as the administrators, BDO Stoy Hayward, continue with their three-month review. Fosters currently has 1,700 staff.

Directors called in the administrators after the company's bankers said they could no longer provide adequate financial support. Fosters' stores have been hit by sales of branded sportswear which has affected sales of its own denim and casualwear ranges. A

disappointing Christmas and a deteriorating market led the group's bankers to call for a review of operations. The directors then applied for an administration order.

Fosters was founded in 1876 and was part of the Sears retail empire until 1992. It was then the subject of a management buy-out led by David Carter-Johnson. But with a weak brand and an increasingly competitive market it has found the going tough. It now has significant debts and recorded a loss of £2.1m last year on sales of £95m.

BDO Stoy Hayward is concentrating on stabilising the company's finances before any decision is made on a possible sale. BDO's David Gilbert said the plans was to turn Fosters into a leaner and profitable company "providing a platform for future growth".

Unions target Midland in recognition battle

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

MIDLAND Bank is being targeted by the labour movement for a high profile campaign on union recognition ahead of a law on bargaining rights.

The Banking Insurance and Finance Union believes it has a watertight case for the restoration of a negotiating agreement on behalf of 9,000 junior and middle managers and has had talks with management on the issue.

Although the Government's White Paper on Fairness at Work is unlikely to be translated into law until next year, the union wants to strike a voluntary deal with the bank.

Already more than 100 MPs have signed an early day motion condemning the bank for its "dictatorial" decision 18 months ago to withdraw recognition for managers. The motion deplores the "denial of individual and collective trade union representation on behalf of employees, particularly against a

background of bank profits which has risen by 28 per cent to £1.625m."

The MPs said "a dictatorial management culture had no basis for developing a commitment to partnership as a basis for corporate success in the future" and urged the bank to adopt a policy of co-operation rather than confrontation.

The union says more than half the managers are members and it would have little difficulty in winning a ballot on recognition.

A spokeswoman for the bank pointed out that clerical and administration staff still enjoyed full union negotiating rights. When the decision was taken less than half the managers were union members. Midland had set up a structure of consultative councils where elected representatives met senior managers.

"The CBI has urged that more than half of the total workforce should have to opt for union bargaining rights before they were granted. The TUC believes it should be if half of those voting.

هكذا من الأصل



BRIAN TORA

Merger mania returns

Merger mania is back in the air. Citicorp is combining with Travelers Group, Household International is getting together with Beneficial Corporation. British names such as Rolls-Royce, Savoy Hotels and Cunard Line are being swallowed by foreign buyers. In the US, takeover deals have totalled more than \$32bn so far this year. Has the world gone mad?

The urge to merge was enough to push indices both sides of the Atlantic through important barriers: 9,000 on the Dow Jones went on the back of the mooted creation of the world's largest financial company. We saw 6,000 fall here soon after. It is amazing what the odd bit of corporate activity can produce.

Even though there are plenty who draw attention to the extended valuation levels of most main markets, it is becoming increasingly hard to find really committed pessimists these days. The trouble has been that those who have been bearish have usually turned out to be talking their book, having unwisely stuck to cash as the market continued to rise. And there is a belief that there are still big investors sitting on the sidelines waiting to dive in with their liquidity at the first sign of a wobble. I wonder if this is not just wishful thinking.

Two things trouble me. First, all this activity smacks of a mature bull market. These recent mergers represent cases of companies getting together with a view to cutting costs, improving profits and so justifying present market ratings. Second, I am no longer convinced the economic outlook is as rosy as the bulls would have you believe. The higher pound must be taking its toll on UK earnings. Continental mar-

kets are racing away without any sign as yet that a full-blown recovery is on the way. And as for Japan - therein could lie Nemesis.

This market is liquidity driven. Too much money has been chasing a supply of stock that has had no natural renewal built into it for some time. There are no privatisations to speak of in the UK. Demutualisations may well have swelled the market capitalisation, but only by unlocking embedded value. If anything, the issuance of new shares as societies turn themselves into companies created more of a problem than it solved. Demand was created from institutional investors who had no option but to pile into the market.

With the OECD forecasting that economic growth in this country could fall to as little as 1.2 per cent by the middle of this year, it is hard to see present valuation levels holding up. It would be a brave person who would recommend a wholesale selling of this market, given the demographic pressures that are likely to drive more money into equities in the long term, but surely enough is enough so far in 1998.

The old adage "sell in May and go away" was probably more to do with the social calendar in those days when markets were moved by individuals, not faceless investing corporations. The big players in the markets closed off their London houses and went off to enjoy themselves through the summer. I believe the time has come to repair to the country early. This year, the season starts for me at Easter.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Grig Middleton investment strategy committee.

Cash in your dormant deposits

Millions of pounds are lying forgotten in building society and bank accounts.

Iain Morse reports

Forgetful savers and big changes in the way banks and building societies operate mean there are millions of pounds lying unclaimed in dormant accounts. So checking up on old pass books and statements can be a route to recovering lost cash.

Accounts fall dormant when account holders stop using them for a number of years. While banks and building societies try to keep in touch by writing to an account holder's last known address, most will stop issuing regular statements after periods of between one and five years if there have been no transactions or contact.

"It's difficult to give any one reason why people forget they have cash on deposit," says John Barker, in charge of dormant accounts at Bradford & Bingley, "perhaps they move more than used to be the case, often going out of area for the branch where they opened an account."

The British Bankers' Association (BBA) estimates there are some 60 million bank accounts spread among 38 million people in the UK. With 15 per cent of us operating more than one current account, the rise of "multiple banking" provides another explanation.

Meanwhile, our building societies have around 11 million members, but operate an estimated 37 million savings accounts. When Bradford & Bingley decided to contact dormant account holders in October 1995, they wrote to those with less than £50 in accounts where there had been no customer transactions for at least five years.

"We sent 100,000 letters, getting an initial response of under 40 per cent," recalls Mr Barker, "and re-united the daughter of a deceased member with a total of £14,000 still held in dormant savings accounts."

Bradford & Bingley have since consolidated their dormant accounts into a single holding account, cutting costs and paying extra interest as a result. While he deals with about seven cases each week, Mr Barker warns: "Don't get too excited if you find an old pass book: the average amount



held in our remaining dormant accounts is just £7."

Concluding that the amount shown in a pass book will be in an account with interest paid can also lead to disappointment. Most enquiries are dealt with by the society in question, but Brian Murphy, the Building Society Ombudsman, adjudicates on those where no agreement is reached.

"They can be very difficult for all concerned. You don't need a pass book to make a withdrawal. A society will pay out on other forms of personal identification, then make up the pass book only when it is finally presented. "Our members are obliged to keep

full records for six years in arrears, and the reality is that you may have a problem proving you have any money in a dormant account. On the other hand, we can't be expected to keep full records for ever, as the costs would be prohibitive."

The costs of checking up on a dormant account can easily exceed the amount held in it, but Mr Murphy points out: "Every building society is obliged by its statutes to take care of your money and will try to track down an account without making any charge."

The Banking Ombudsman deals with a larger number of dormant

account cases: 171 for the year to October 1997. Most of these arise from pass-book accounts which were superseded by statement-based accounts in the early 1970s.

"Bank takeovers and the computerisation of records have helped exacerbate the problem, but our members also think the number of dormant accounts is increasing, so we are anxious to deal with the problem."

The amounts left in these bank accounts can be very small. National Westminster Bank recently dealt with a case involving 16 shillings from a pass-book last updated in 1938. As with other clearing banks, NatWest has

computerised written records dating back to the 1930s, and are as much concerned about the future growth in number of dormant accounts as those already in existence.

Lynsey Tapley, at NatWest, warns: "From a customer's point of view, these accounts hold lost money, but from our point of view they represent a growing overhead which has to be controlled. We want dormant account holders to come forward and take their money."

To this end, the BBA has introduced a standard claim form available through member banks' local branches, which is intended to provide a "common gateway" for those hunting dormant accounts. All banks are obliged to keep dormant account registers, including an account holder's full name and last-known address.

The Banking Ombudsman thinks that "nearly all complaints are brought to us in good faith, and the conversion of building societies brings out a lot of cases, as members' claim 'windfall rights'."

A growing number of claims arise after the death of an account holder. The solicitor handling probate should write to banks or building societies where the deceased was known to have held accounts. You can also save on solicitor's fees by making a claim of your own, using copies of the death certificate and will.

Remember, if you are tracking down a dormant account start with the relevant bank or building society. Photocopy documentary evidence - old pass books, cheque books, statements, letters, or cards, and send these in with your letter of enquiry, but keep the originals.

If dealing with a bank, ask for a copy of the BBA's "Dormant Bank Accounts" form. Ask a building society for written guidance on its dormant account procedure. Only go to the relevant ombudsman once you have exhausted these routes and are unable to agree on a settlement. Your bank or building society will have details of each ombudsman's address.

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Legal & General is offering a one-year fixed-rate deposit account paying up to 8 per cent gross on deposits over £50,000. On maturity, the money will be paid into L&G's instant access account. Call 0500 111200.

Yorkshire Bank is extending its range of mortgages where any interest repaid is calculated on a daily basis instead of annually, with a two-year fixed rate until 30 April 2000. Other rates avail-

able include three, five and 10-year options of up to 95 per cent of a home's value for first-time buyers. Call 0800 202122.

NPI is launching a six-month

Guaranteed Growth Bond, offering 3.21 per cent net, equivalent to 6.52 per cent net annually, on investments of £50,000 or more. Call 01222 782380.

John Holman & Sons is offering European car breakdown and annual travel cover as optional extras in their new caravan insurance package. Call 01268 735566.

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Worrying records in the markets



THE
JONATHAN
DAVIS
COLUMN

Another week, another record-breaking merger, another stock market peak on both sides of the Atlantic. The bull market is certainly moving from the impressive to the awesome stage. It is less than 18 months since Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, warned about "irrational exuberance" in the stock market. Since then, share prices have risen by around 40 per cent, with the mighty bull trampling all before it.

Clearly, the latest mega-merger in the financial sector marks a new milestone, but quite what it foretells is not immediately clear. The get-together between Citicorp and Travelers Group will create the world's largest single company by asset value. Given that most corporate strategies are driven by emulation, it can only reinforce the trend towards consolidation in the financial sector in Europe.

Of course, in aggregate and over time, bouts of mega-mergers tend to leave shareholders nursing a nasty hangover. In practice, many of the

promised synergies fail to materialise. But one can hardly blame the managements of the big banks for opting for such grandiose visions at this time. News of the Citicorp/Travelers deal added more than 20 per cent overnight to the combined market capitalisation of the two companies, echoing the experience of many previous deals in the sector (Lloyds/TSB being a good example from the UK).

If investors were to beg publicly for more such deals to take place, they could hardly have given a clearer signal. What is striking is how the current enthusiasm for merger activity contrasts with attitudes just a few years ago. Then, most investors were trying to rein in managements. The whole "shareholder value" movement began as an attempt to put the brakes on corporate aggrandisement. Now, it is having the opposite effect.

Time will tell whether the trend towards consolidation is well founded in industrial logic and works to the long-term benefit of shareholders. As

the New York economist, Peter Bernstein points out, the shift in attitudes in the highly stretched valuations of the main stock markets at the moment. As has been widely observed, the bull market has driven the dividend yield on the American stock market (now 1.6 per cent) to just about its lowest recorded level. (In the UK, the market yield is much higher, at 2.7 per cent, but still well below the long-run historical average.)

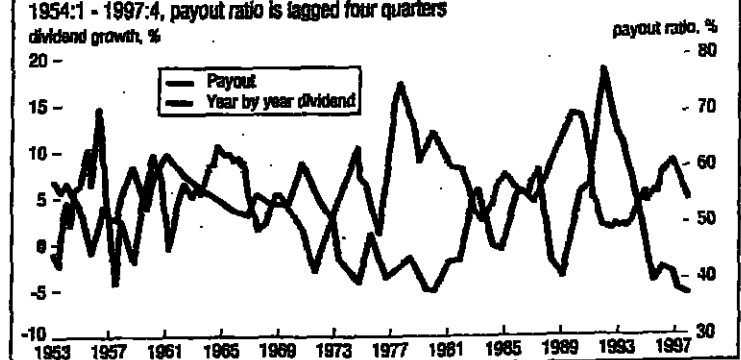
That is a warning sign in itself, although there are extenuating circumstances in the form of the high level of share buy-backs and special dividend payments. Just as interesting is the fact the payout ratio – the amount of corporate earnings which are paid out in dividends – has also fallen to its lowest post-war level (35 per cent). At the same time, the value which the market accords to future corporate earnings power (the p/e ratio) is at or near record levels – 30-times historic earnings in the US market, 22 times for the FTSE 100 index.

Together, these factors amount to a huge – possibly unprecedented – vote of confidence by investors in the competence of corporate management. In the old days, the ability to pay a good dividend was seen as the benchmark of a sound company, and the payout ratio as a good proxy for management's confidence about the future prospects of the business.

Analysis of past data shows that the dividend payout ratio has been a very good indicator of future corporate profitability. The higher the payout ratio, the faster earnings have tended to grow over the subsequent five years, and vice versa. By that token, its current record low is a warning signal: it means earnings in five years' time will be lower than they are today – not something which is factored in at all in current market thinking. Looked at another way, the value of reinvested dividends has always accounted for the lion's share of the total return earned by investors. But no longer.

The lower the dividend yield and the

Year by year dividend growth v payout ratio
1954:1 - 1997:4, payout ratio is lagged four quarters



dividend payout ratio, in effect, the less investors are relying on hard cash today, and the more they are relying on future projected earnings and high market-multiples to make up their expected return from the stock market.

This inevitably means there is more risk in equities than before. As Peter Bernstein reminds us: "Managements are appropriating to themselves responsibility for the reinvestment of an outside proportion of earnings, rather than giving stockholders the option of deciding whether to reinvest in the same companies that produce the earnings."

For investors, future returns will be

very much dependent on capital appreciation – "what someone else will be willing to pay at some point in the future for the assets you own today".

The point, as always, is to be aware of the longer-term risks you are running. At the very least, history suggests one needs to be cautious about the ability of managements always to act in the best interests of shareholders. Yet today's markets are, in effect, betting both that managements are capable of delivering better results for shareholders than ever before and that the markets will continue to recognise the fact in high p/e ratios.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

How to reduce paper losses

Even if you lose a share certificate, the company still holds a register of your interests

Losing a share certificate, or having it eaten by the dog, is inconvenient but it is not a disaster. If this happens to you, do not panic, as it does not mean that you have lost your investment.

A share certificate is issued by a company to show that the shareholder's name has been entered in the company's register of shareholders.

All companies are legally required to maintain a register of shareholders, containing details of the name and address and the number of shares held by each shareholder in the company.

The register is normally maintained by a registrar, which is generally one of the big banks. However, a few companies maintain their own registers.

Despite the trend towards paperless share ownership with shares being held by a nominee, many people – myself included – prefer to hold certificates. We all know that financial documents should be kept in a safe place. Nevertheless, however careful we are, mishaps do happen. Should you find yourself in this situation, follow this step-by-step guide to put matters right.

Either write to the company or, preferably, direct to the registrars if you know who undertakes this role. The addresses will be in the company's report and accounts. If you have not got these, your stockbroker, local library or BT's directory enquiries will be able to help.

When you contact the company or registrars, give as many details as possible:



Lost property: place financial documents in safe keeping at your bank

Ruf Xavier

- The name(s) the shares are registered in.
- If the company issues more than one category of share, identify which you hold.
- State the number of shares held.
- If possible, the serial number of the certificate(s).
- It would be helpful to enclose a photocopy of the latest dividend voucher.

In due course, the company's registrars will contact you. They may ask you to complete a form regarding your loss.

Before issuing a duplicate certificate a "letter of indemnity" will normally be forwarded for signature by all the parties in whose name the lost share certificate was issued.

In certain cases, generally when the market value of the shares represented by the lost share certificate is in excess of £5,000, the letter of indemnity will have to be countersigned by a bank or insurance company. However, the £5,000 figure is not an universal – some companies insist on the indemnity being countersigned for lower levels.

An indemnity is a contract in which the indemnifier (in this case the shareholder who lost

the certificate), promises to compensate the other party (in this situation the company who issued the now lost certificate) should that party suffer any loss as a result of the issue of a duplicate share certificate. It is unusual, though not unknown, for there to be foul play surrounding a loss.

The requirement of a bank or insurance company to countersign the letter of indemnity may be viewed as a "belt and braces" approach. In situations where the indemnity has been countersigned, the company has two courses of action. If the first party, that is the shareholder, for some reason cannot reimburse the company for any loss that it has suffered as a result of issuing the duplicate certificate, then the countersignatory will be obliged to pay. This is why the party countersigning the indemnity has to be of undoubted integrity.

Banks and insurance companies also have their own interests to protect. They will generally take a counter-indemnity from the shareholder who has lost the certificate. In other words, if they are obliged to pay, in turn they have re-

course to the shareholder to whom the duplicate certificate was issued.

You will not be surprised to learn that the issue of a duplicate certificate is generally not without cost. Most companies charge £15 plus VAT – making the total cost £17.62 – while a few levy no charge. When a bank or insurance company is asked to countersign a letter of indemnity, a charge is usually made for the service.

This is typically 0.25 per cent of the market value of the shares, subject to a minimum charge. This can range from £15 up to £35 or more, though it may be waived for good customers of long-standing. Banks and insurance companies will only countersign a letter of indemnity for their customers. Some registrars have an insurance policy which dispenses with the need for a letter of indemnity. The premiums vary significantly, as does the market value which triggers the need for such insurance.

It makes sound sense to look after all financial documents carefully. Placing them in safe keeping at your bank is probably the best course of action.

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BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max. amt	Fee	Interest
MORTGAGES				
FIXED RATES				
Standard Life	0990 132149	0.05% for 1 year	95%	0.75% Fixed MRP for up to 80% No MRP for up to 80%
Prudential	0900 100073	5.49% to 30.6.01	85%	2.25% No MRP for up to 80%
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99% to 1.9.03	95%	2.25% No MRP for up to 80%
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	0.10% for 1 year	80%	£250 Free rate £250 fee related
First Mortgage	0900 050088	4.44% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.65% to 1.9.03	95%	Refund with
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	3.99% to 1.9.03	95%	£250 No MRP for up to 80%
Hatfield	0800 101110	5.75% to 31.8.01	90%	£150 No MRP for up to 80%
Birmingham Midshires	0800 302010	5.99% to 5 years	95%	Refund of rate fee
FIRST-TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	0.10% for 1 year	80%	£250 2.5% of advance related
First Mortgage	0900 050088	5.59% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.65% to 1.9.03	95%	Refund of rate fee
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS				
UNSECURED				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	9.9% H	£183.13	£156.11
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	12.5%	£190.23	£165.77
Direct Line	0181 500 9966	12.8% A	£183.75	£166.28
SECURED LOANS (SECOND CHARGE)				
Wesley & Ruggie				
Direct Line	0181 500 9966	9.7%	£20.10	£19.10
Bank of Scotland	0800 121110	10.7%	£20.10	£19.10
First Direct	0245 100103	11.2%	£20.10	£19.10
OVERDRAFTS				
Wesley & Ruggie				
Bank of Scotland	0800 121110	12.5%	£190.23	£165.77
First Direct	0245 100103	11.2%	£20.10	£19.10
CREDIT CARDS				
Wesley & Ruggie				
Capital One	0800 660000	12.9%	£190.23	£165.77
First Direct	0245 100103	11.2%	£20.10	£19.10
Bank of Scotland	0800 121110	10.7%	£20.10	£19.10
First Mortgage	0900 050088	4.44% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99% to 1.9.03	95%	2.25% No MRP for up to 80%
GOLD CARDS				
Capital One	0800 660000	12.9%	£190.23	£165.77
First Direct	0245 100103	11.2%	£20.10	£19.10
Bank of Scotland	0800 121110	10.7%	£20.10	£19.10
First Mortgage	0900 050088	4.44% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99% to 1.9.03	95%	2.25% No MRP for up to 80%
STONE CARDS				
Capital One	0800 660000	12.9%	£190.23	£165.77
First Direct	0245 100103	11.2%	£20.10	£19.10
Bank of Scotland	0800 121110	10.7%	£20.10	£19.10
First Mortgage	0900 050088	4.44% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99% to 1.9.03	95%	2.25% No MRP for up to 80%

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max. amt	Fee	Interest
INSTANT ACCESS				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	0800 445265	5.75%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS				
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS				
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS				
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
FIXED-RATE BONDS				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
FIRST TESSAS				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (gross)				
Northern Rock	0845 605 0500	5.99%	£1	£1
Wesley & Ruggie	0800 774439	5.75%	£1	£1
Standard Life	0990 132149	5.75%	£1	£1
Leeds & Halifax	0900 232777	5.75%	£1	£1

COLLECT TO INVEST: JOHN WINDSOR

Triumph of British classics

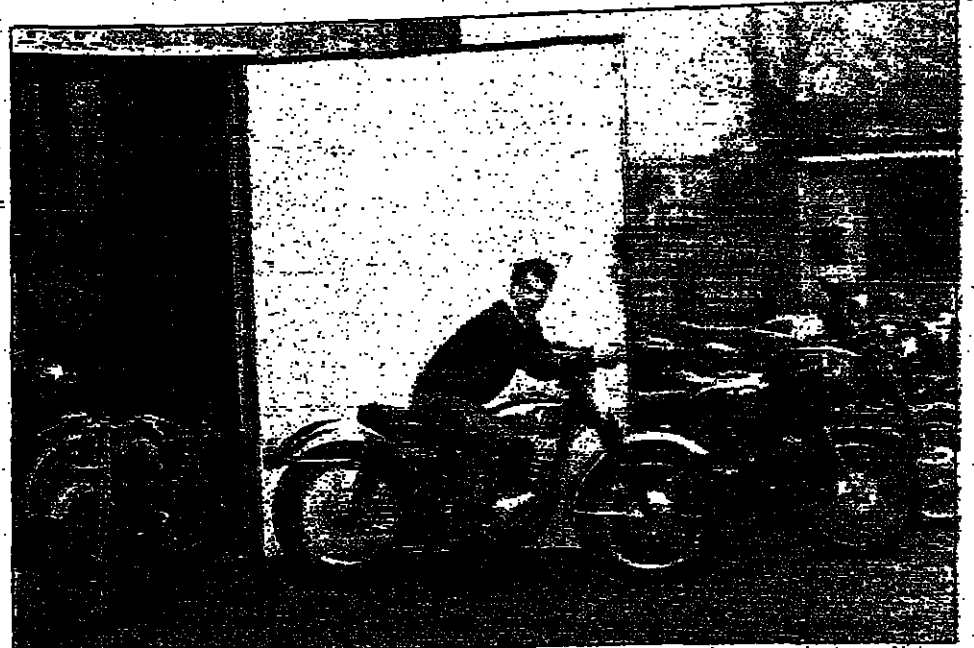
Prices of vintage British bikes are revving up as an older generation returns to the road

Prices of vintage British motorcycles are rising so quickly that Roger Sharman is importing them from the United States. Polished metal glints through tall hedgerows as you approach Cake Street Classics, a garage and homebased rural Laxfield, in the heart of rural Suffolk. From here, a British bike still with Ohio number plates may be shipped to Oslo, Munich or even Reykjavik.

Recently, encouraged by the strength of the pound, especially against other European currencies, British bike enthusiasts have been buying the lion's share of vintage bikes on offer - and pushing prices up as well. Two years ago, Mr Sharman - a 49-year-old former biker - was exporting 60 per cent of his stock to Europe. Now, the Brits are taking 90 per cent.

His own cherished 1960 BSA Spitfire street racer, one of only 1,200 made, was discovered in a barn in New Jersey and is now resplendent following the four-week restoration he lavished upon it. Such a bike would have been bought in the US as a fun runaround. Almost as a toy. Nowadays, almost all American collectors are after only their native Harley Davidsons and Japanese models.

In the British and European collectors' market, the Spitfire would have been worth £5,000 two years ago and £7,000 a year ago. Today, he would be looking for £8,500. If he was selling, that is. It's nostalgia that drives the British market, he reckons. That means bikes of the Sixties and early Seventies are most in demand. Daredevils who raced them from café to café on main roads are now approaching middle age. Mr Sharman says: "Their children are off their hands and they have paid off their mortgage. As soon as they



Driven by nostalgia: Roger Sharman has seen UK demand accelerate recently Bryn Cotton

get on a motorbike they feel 10 years younger. That's an investment in itself." And get on them they do. A customer telephoned while I was there, asking for a BSA M21. That is a mid-Fifties sidecar model that has acquired a big following. It means the wife can stop complaining and join the fun. M21s are not rare. They cost about £2,500.

The Scandinavians take to the roads even more readily than the Brits. The Japanese - who are now less able to afford bikes but are no doubt saving up their low-value yen - tend to board their museum style. What of the 1929 500cc Rudge 'Whitworth' with flat handlebars leaning against the garage door? Not much nostalgia value, surely, now that almost all its riders have died of old age. "Not at all," said Mr Sharman. "You should see those old boys hit 125mph on the standard quarter mile. I know one who has a Rudge that can go as fast as a 1100cc Suzuki of the late Eighties." Tell that to your grandchildren.

An advantage of bikes compared with vintage cars is that they are smaller and easier to store. You can garage them in the garden shed. "Ideal for the average man," says Mr Sharman. But being treated as an "average man" can still come as a shock to respectable middle-

aged bikers. My supervisor at university, a fiftysomething whose biking horrified his family, once screamed to a halt outside the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, where the doorman waved him away, shouting "You can't park that here." Raising his visor, the ageing biker said in his gentlemanly way: "I believe a room has been booked." The result was effusive apologies.

In recent years, at the Plough Inn, not far from Cake Street, a group of biker-again bikers who had been released from their leather jackets, booked dinner there by telephone, turned up in normal street wear, then walked out of the restaurant in protest, as soon as the meal was served. There must be politeness - and legal - ways of keeping up the ends of wrinkle bikers. Fortunately, each makes of bike has an enthusiasts' club. They have a reputation for friendliness and helpful advice. For instance, about where to find spares.

Mr Sharman has 20 tons of spares. He can replace practically anything with wheels. He used to restore horse-drawn vehicles. Then he hired out a 1000cc. The motorbikes are a hobby of his that got out of hand, four years ago, and turned into a full-time profession. We walked down an avenue of 40 bikes to where a 600cc

Norton stood. The frame and engine were late Fifties but the bike had been customised in 1972, "Easy Rider" style, with apehanger handlebars, high-rise seat and a diamond-shaped petrol tank. Not a lot of demand for such a poor man's Harley, though the Germans have been buying them. Whoever customised it would probably have paid only £100 for the basic machine. Mr Sharman was offering it at £1,200.

A better investment, he said, would be a BSA 500cc Gold Star, the ultimate café racer of the Sixties, capable of 80mph in first gear. Their price, £5,000-£9,000, has been stable for the past five years or more. Soon, he thinks, prices should be putting a spurt on. A Manx Norton, designed for the TT races, could cost you £18,000. But it is middle-range prices that are rising fastest. BSA, Triumph and Norton are all solid names to invest in - though Norton spares are rather expensive.

Are motorbikes as dangerous as they are made out? I was determined not to even mount one. Instead, I stumbled and cracked a rib on the pedal of a parked 1941 Matchless. Those old bikes certainly pack a punch. Even when standing still.

*Source: Micropol, all figures offer to bid, gross income reinvested, for periods ending 1/9/98. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The price of units and the income from them is not guaranteed and can fall as well as rise. The Portfolio Trust has been available as a PEP since January 1995. Full written terms and conditions are available on request. For your security, all calls are recorded. Royal & Sun Alliance Unit Trust Management Limited, registered in England, no 2170242, is a member of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group. Registered Office: 1 Bartholomew Lane, London, EC2N 2AB. Members of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority, solely for life assurance, pensions and unit trust business, and by IMRO.

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ie in on the best deals and for tenants

very in the housing
has meant rising
and a shortage of lets.
ade reports

blems faced by would-be renters
the opposite end of those that once
owners. Over the past two years, rising
prices have allowed many hard-
ed homeowners to climb back out of
negative equity.

Figures from Halifax show the price of
the average UK house rose 5.4 per cent in
1997. Leading the growth was Greater
London, where an increase of 15.2 per cent
took the price of the average house back
above £100,000 for the first time since 1989.

But this good news for homeowners is
bad news for would-be tenants. Negative
equity created a group of so-called "reluctant
landlords" who could afford to move
home only by letting out their old property.
About half of the property lets managed

by estate agents are owned by people work-
ing overseas or in another part of the UK.

Many of these landlords are selling up
as their existing tenants' leases come to an
end. The result is a shortage of good-quality
private-rented accommodation, and soaring
rents for that which remains.

Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, the chief ex-
ecutive of the National Association of Es-
tate Agents, says: "Many landlords are
selling, and that does create shortages.
Hence, rents will go up."

Judging by the Royal Institute of Char-
tered Surveyors' (RICS) latest report on re-
sidential renting, this is happening all over
the country. RICS member, Mike Huxtable,
of Ottery St Mary, Devon, reports: "A com-
plete lack of properties coming on to the re-
sidential sales market [is] tending to increase
rents for those that do become available."

Patrick Waters, of Solihull, West Mid-
lands, agrees, saying: "There is a shortage
of good-quality property, and rents are
creeping upwards." David Moulton of
Southampton says rents in areas near him
have been climbing by 10 per cent a year.

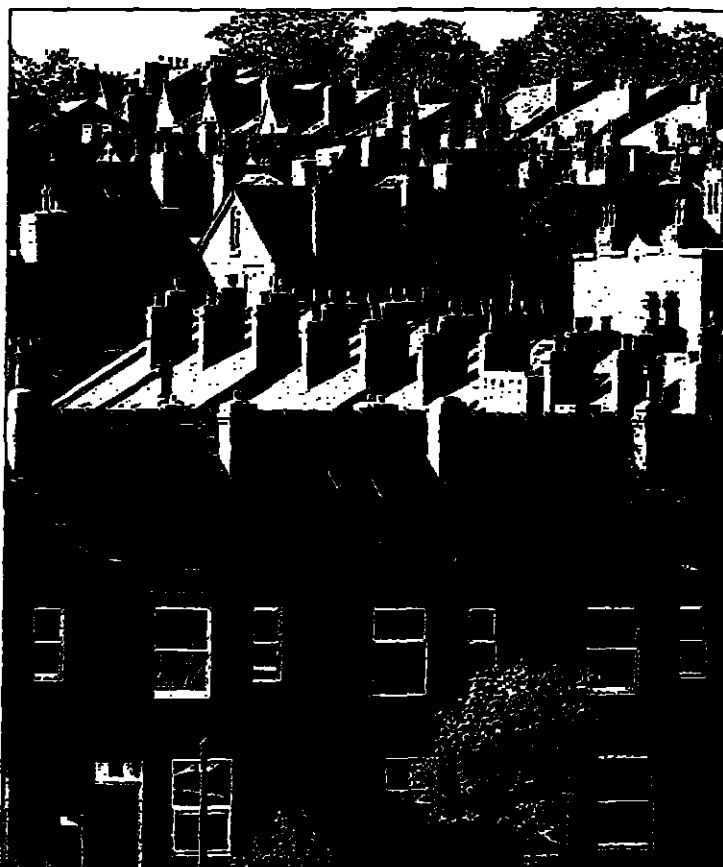
As the table below shows, rents have

been climbing fastest at the top end of the
market, where the excess of demand over
supply is biggest. Rising rents are not the
only hurdle tenants face. Care is also
needed in choosing a good letting agent.
In many cases, it is the agent who will retain
your deposit. You will want to be sure this
deposit is safe and that it will earn interest
for you until the tenancy ends.

Mr Dunsmore-Hardy says: "Once a
tenant has agreed to rent a property, they
may have to lodge anything from a month
to six weeks' deposit. The important thing
is to deal with an agent who has a money-
protection scheme in place. The tenant's also
perfectly entitled to have the deposit accruing
interest, the benefit of which comes to him."

A money-protection scheme means
your deposit will be safe even if your
letting agent goes bust or disappears. If the
agent you use is a member of the Naca, Rics
or Arla (Association of Residential Letting
Agents), they probably have a money-pro-
tection scheme - but you should still check.

For a free copy of Rics' guide, 'Renting a
House or Flat', call 0171-222 7000.



Less room at the top: Rents are rising as more landlords sell up

Checklist for Tenants

- Check what term you are signing up for. Tenancy agreements known in the jargon as assured short-hold tenancies typically run for six months, but can run for longer.
- Check what furniture, fittings and appliances are included in the let. Ensure the inventory records any damage already there when you move in.
- Furniture and appliances included with the let must meet statutory fire and safety requirements. If in doubt, ask to see the landlord's certificates of compliance.
- The letting agent should give you a written statement specifying the rent, deposit and any charge to you for drawing up the tenancy agreement. Check who is to pay future costs for items such as checking the inventory or renewing the agreement.
- Ask who will be holding your deposit and whether the money will earn you interest. If the letting agent is to hold it, check they have a money-protection scheme. Check how you get the deposit back.
- Establish who is responsible for any repairs to the property and who you can approach to sort out any problems. The letting agent must give you an address in England and Wales you can contact.
- Before you sign the tenancy agreement check all utilities are connected at the property. Read the meters and note what they say. If there is a garden, check whether you are responsible for its care.
- Check if you are agreeing to any conditions which apply when you move out. Some landlords specify you must clean all the carpets, for example.
- Insure any valuables you are bringing into the flat. The landlord's insurance will not cover this.
- Get a receipt if you pay rent or a deposit in cash.

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENTS THROUGHOUT THE UK

	End 1996	End 1997	Increase
One bedroom flat	£295	£310	5.1%
Three-bedroom semi	£422	£464	9.9%
Four-bedroom det	£589	£656	11.4%
Average UK house (sale price)	£66,117	£69,647	5.4%

Source: RICS/Halifax



ROBIN AMLÖT
INTERNET
INVESTOR

A screen showing for the news that moves markets

There is an old joke, at least it is old by information technology standards, about the newly married software designer whose wife was eagerly quizzed by her friends on returning from the honeymoon. "How was it?" they ask. She looks thoughtful and replies: "I don't know. All he did every night was sit on the end of the bed and tell me how good it was going to be one day."

The "promise" of what the internet and the world wide web can do for most of us is still around about the same level. But there are encouraging signs that the potential is beginning to be realised. Take share trading on the internet. There are several trading facilities now available, and more on the way, but none of them is a true trading system. Not yet.

You do not actually execute a sale or purchase when you take advantage of web trading facilities. So far, all you are doing is sending a sophisticated e-mail to another human being, a stockbroker, who will re-key your order.

Which means that dealing on the web is not yet faster and cheaper than using your telephone but it will be when the next phase of trading software is implemented, when you can click on a price, enter the size of your trade and be taken automatically to the broker with the best deal.

What is happening already, as we all become aware of the need to take more care of our financial future, is the development of an increasing level of sophistication among individual investors. There are around 17 million individual shareholders in the UK. Of that total, around half are Halifax shareholders and probably own shares for the first time. However, from that base there is what David Joyce, Business Manager of Datastream/ICV calls "a continuum of sophistication".

As we, as investors, become more sophisticated in handling our financial affairs, our information requirements also become more sophisticated. Datastream/ICV's Market-Eye internet

service, a baby brother of the company's Topic3 system used by city professionals, is targeted specifically at the PC literate investor.

Market-Eye on the internet now has 24,000 registered users regularly accessing its free pages and a further 1,000 paying customers accessing real-time share prices, rather than seeing them with a 20-minute delay imposed. The site also offers a bulletin board service where you can post questions and comments on investment matters for others to read and answer.

Datastream/ICV is working on a service called InvestorLink, which is not available yet but, in the words of that immortal, unknown software designer, will be there "soon". It is aimed at the investor relations and shareholder information market. "Price-moving information is only going to the professionals now. This way it will be available to private investors," comments David Joyce.

Information will be accessed directly from the companies themselves. InvestorLink will include news, historical comparisons and peer rankings, along with company's financial calendars, corporate governance issues and any other specific investor information a company wants to communicate.

It will not be an unbiased news service because the coverage of each company will contain information provided by the company. Datastream/ICV hopes that it will be the kind of information which, in the past, has been available to the city trader immediately but which the private investor will only have read in his newspaper the following day.

Finally, a word of warning for when the site does go live. Do remember to use the right suffix when you key in InvestorLink's web address - that is: ".co.uk". If you type in ".com" instead you will be magically whisked across the Atlantic to a website run by a financial adviser in California.

InvestorLink:
www.investorlink.co.uk

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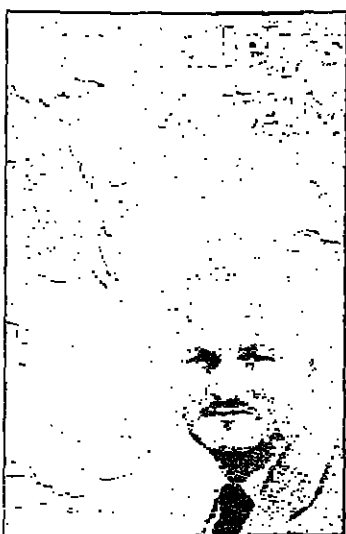
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Leap of faith by the men of God



Easingwold:
Church leaders
meeting at the site
of a Cold War
bunker opine that
not all is gloom for
religion, despite
priestly sex abuse
scandals and falling
congregations

GORDON the driver edged the car through the security barrier to the Victorian country house. It seemed an elaborate precaution for a mere conference centre on the outskirts of the undistinguished little village of Easingwold, just the north of York. "Ah well," he said, drawing on his years in the Territorial Army, "during the Cold War, it was ... and this is pretty much an open secret locally," he added, as if to reassure himself he was not betraying military confidences. "... an underground command bunker for top brass in the event of nuclear attack."

Today the house, Hawkhill, is the headquarters of the Home Office Emergency Planning College, where key personnel from public authorities, voluntary groups and private firms gather - discreetly tucked away from public view amid its 230 acres of farmland and woods - to discuss the kind of things most of us would rather not think about: a massive radioactive leak from a nuclear plant, an epidemic of rabies, a major emergency in a built-up area. They engage in exercises on co-ordinating emergency services, mitigating the psychological consequences of disaster and study the escalation of "blame culture" in the media.

All of which, cynics might say,

sounds exactly the kind of training needed by the leaders of the nation's churches who gathered there last week for a confidential meeting on the place of religion in the modern world. After all, with falling attendances in all the mainstream denominations, priestly sex abuse scandals, and secret memos admitting that the Church of England is becoming increasingly irrelevant, it might seem that a spot of Emergency Planning is well in order. That, clearly, could be the only reason for every bishop - Anglican and Catholic, with their Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army and other churches equivalents in the half of the country covered by the province of York - to assemble in private for two days. Couldn't it?

So cynics might say. The trouble with cynics is that they sometimes overlook the straightforward in their search for the contemptible. It's something we in the media routinely do when it comes to the church. Yes, of course, there are rows and scandals, and politicking and personal conflicts, but the stuff at the very heart of church affairs - what is going on this Easter weekend - never gets into the papers at all. It's like covering football only with stories on transfer deals, managerial sackings and boardroom scandals - and

never writing a match report.

The Northern bishops meet privately like this every year. And certainly in the plenary sessions, smaller groups and in the coffee-break conversations they did talk about all that kind of thing - how to deal with sex abuse by Catholic priests or what to do about an Anglican minister who has run off with someone he met on the Internet. They talked of unease about the Prime Minister's recent interference over the appointment of a new Anglican Bishop of Liverpool and of whether Catholic bishops should accept places in the House of Lords. They shared stories of how on separate occasions Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had both recently privately confided to bishops that it was up to the Church to keep the Government "on its toes".

But the core of their concern was something considerably more far-reaching. For it is clear listening to bishops speak in private that they are becoming aware that the reality of most people's lives is remote from the way the church speaks to them. Indeed the old religious vocabulary and forms can be worse than meaningless because they actively alienate those the church seeks to influence.

They are not talking about adopting secular values uncritically; some already feel uneasy at being engaged in a conspiracy of silence - on divorce, single parents and, in the case of the Catholics, contraception - for fear of offending large sections of their congregations. But there is a growing realisation that the modern post-Christian world needs more than ever some of the values the Church holds dear - love, giving, service and a vision that the good of the community are as important as the Eighties shibboleths about individual choice and personal fulfilment.

So what we need is a return to religion? Not necessarily. Certainly not if it means the old authoritarian kind or the encouragement of half-baked New Age spirituality. But, as one of their number told them, the churches need to play a role in re-moralising a multi-cultural plu-



Just north of York Minster the bishops gathered for their annual meeting. Photograph: Peter Byrne/Guzzell

ralist society. In that "communication is as important as wisdom", said another, and if bishops and others insisted on pushing old religious forms and traditional family norms in a changed world they were doomed to failure. It is not just a question of language. The church may need to rethink some of its inherited ideas if it is to pass on its essential values.

Those nurtured on stereotypes

about Trollopean schemers or ineffectual idealists would have been sadly disillusioned at Easingwold. What was striking was not just the maturity of the friendship between the key figures in the different denominations and the quiet power of their services together. Nor was it the degree of self-knowledge; one Papist divine joshed that he had been brought up to believe not just that Jesus was Roman Catholic, but that

his mother was too. But there was a directness about their discussion which the restrained discretion of their public utterances belies.

If only they could talk like that to the public. In private they were blunt about the enormity of the task in hand. They are worried about inequality in a world in which the entire contents of the Bodleian library can be sent round the globe in one second and yet half the world has

no telephone. Or, as one of those present put it, "there is talk now that intergalactic travel may one day be possible and yet the bus services are being cut in Billingham". They were worried too about the loss of Britain's sense of the transcendent: "the problem with young vandals is that they have no sense of awe," said one, succinctly. "If you have no sense of history the present is the only truth," suggested another.

There were the inevitable diversions into the question of Christian unity. But suggestions about the need to put their own house in order did not seem a first priority. "Schisms are not necessarily a bad thing," said one. "Perhaps we have to learn that the diversity of the churches is a blessing rather than a hindrance in speaking to the post-modern world," said another.

"We have to learn to listen to people we don't want to listen to - the marginalised, people in jail," said one bishop. "And to children," said another who had been a key figure in the response to child abuse by Catholic priests. And, even, to the voices and actions of ordinary churchgoers whose faith is unencumbered by the niceties of doctrine and denominational diplomacy: "It was, after all," said one bishop, "the ordinary people who took down the Berlin Wall."

This moment is, said one of the archbishops, a "charcoal fire" moment for the church. Some of his colleagues looked puzzled. He explained. It was by a charcoal fire in the courtyard of the High Priest that Peter betrayed Christ three times. And it was at a charcoal fire by the Sea of Galilee that Peter met the resurrected Christ and began to understand the enormity of what he'd gone wrong. It was the first step in showing him where he should go from there. It was an Easter experience. The bishops scribbled. "I expect that will find its way into a few sermons on Easter Sunday," he said. His fellows laughed, and nodded. So if you hear that in church tomorrow, remember, that was good news exclusive and you read it here first.



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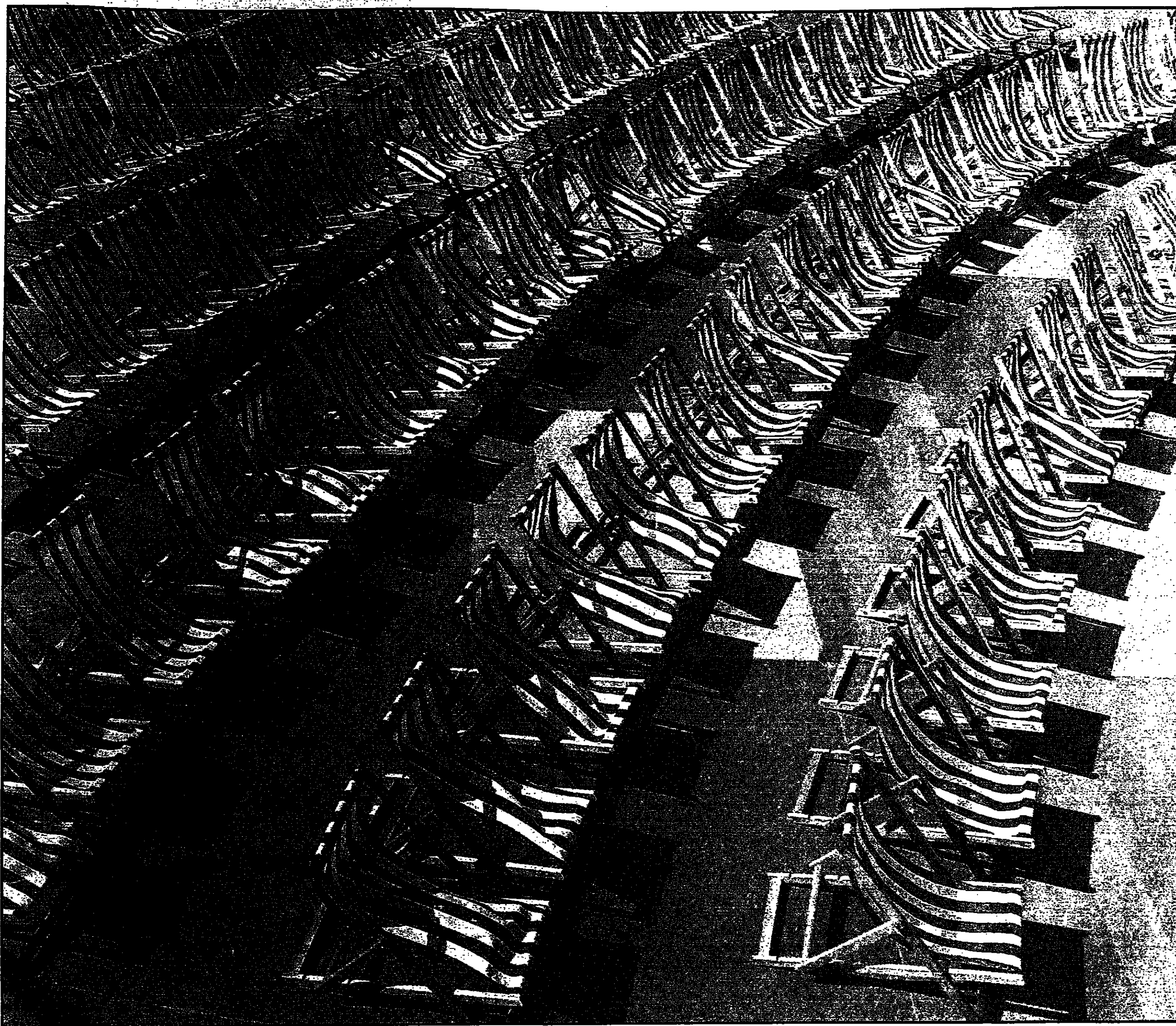
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TIME

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 11 April 1998



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Week in, week out

William Hartston explains what you get if you cross a manhole with a three-legged deer

What a week it has been: in France a driver killed a cyclist and injured another after she was distracted by distress signals emitted by the Tamagotchi virtual pet on the end of her car key-ring; in Pennsylvania a white-tailed deer has been fitted with an artificial leg; in London, a meteorite was sold at auction for more than twice its estimate; in Budapest, five people were arrested on suspicion of stealing about 100

doors in that car in Marseille, distracting the driver into taking her eye off the road in order to provide it with virtual food, it should all have been so predictable – an accident waiting to happen. While we have been worrying about the dangers of mobile phones in cars, the insidious threat of the Tamagotchi was lurking.

In Bangkok, governor Bichit Rattakul has warned city officials to improve drain safety after he fell into an open manhole on his way to lay a wreath at the monument to a former king. "I was a little bruised," he said. "If I were thinner, I would have fallen deeper into the sewage."

The officials will now surely be panicked into looking for a quick, cheap way to cover the manholes, which is where the Hungarians come in. "Open manholes, squire? We've got just the thing: 100 doors and wrought iron portals, perfect for laying across holes in the road, and guaranteed to prevent any governor, however thin, from falling into the effluent beneath."

But the open manholes are only the start. Why, we must ask ourselves, did an anonymous American bidder pay £25,300 at Christie's for a 5-in meteorite that had been estimated to fetch between £10,000 and £12,000? For the answer, we need only consider what meteorites do when they crash to earth: why, they make craters! A meteorite is nothing less than nature's way of making holes in the road. And the more holes, the greater the potential market for stolen doors.

Just stop to think of the effect of all

this. All over the world, we will face a double plague. On the one hand, of holes in the road crudely covered with stolen doors, and on the other, of cyclists who, if they are not mown down by Tamagotchi-loving motorists, will surely come to grief as their machines mount an unexpected door in the middle of the road. Those Romanian footballers were quite right to quit their training ground near the cemetery.

The first recorded death by Tamagotchi happened earlier this week in Marseilles

Not only will the place soon be overflowing with dead cyclists, but their funerals will be accompanied by the incessant bleating of the Tamagotchis that lured them to their doom. How can a footballer keep his eye on the ball with all that going on?

Yet this is far more than simply a clever marketing device for stolen doors. That is only the start, as the rest of the week's news reveals. The second phase began in Somerset, Pennsylvania, where a white-tailed deer named Roadrunner has had an artificial leg fitted. Associated Press reports: "The clunking of his aluminium prosthesis alerts bystanders to his movements, but Roadrunner doesn't seem to mind." Of course he doesn't mind! He

knows he is the first of a new breed of cyberdeer designed to take over the roads of the world. What bleeping Tamagotchi will stand a chance of distracting anyone, when compared with the clunk of a deer's aluminium leg? And what better to surmount those bumps in the road caused by doors laid flat over open manholes and meteorite craters?

If there's one thing better than a deer at overcoming obstacles, it's an elephant. And our final news story of the week provides the last piece of the jigsaw. At the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem the elephants and hippos are unhappy because they are being deprived of their usual 10 loaves of bread every day because of the Passover. Zoo officials say they're concerned that keepers and visitors might come into contact with leavened foods, which are forbidden over the period. Excuses! Isn't it obvious they're slimming down the elephants to maintain jobs for three-legged deer? Five-inch craters would never bother an elephant, so to avoid the potential problem of Jewish mahouts taking the bottom out of the market for cyberdeer, they're slimming down the elephants to make them useless.

With the roads of Europe full of three-legged deer and enfeebled elephants, there will be an even stronger incentive for people to take to the air. Is it any surprise, therefore, to learn (see page 3) that Virgin Atlantic is training people to overcome their fear of flying? Richard Branson has a good deal of explaining to do.

INSIDE



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Easter is a far from festive season for Jewish hippopotamuses and elephants

doors and iron portals, in Thailand, the governor of Bangkok fell down a manhole, and in Bucharest, the Romanian football team have left a training camp where they were preparing for a friendly against Greece because it was too close to a cemetery.

It's all so glaringly obvious what has been going on. We have been blind not even to have suspected it before. Yet now all the evidence is staring us in the face and we can hardly miss it: a worldwide clandestine group of road safety experts is conspiring to revolutionise the transport systems of the civilised world and drive bicycle manufacturers out of business. The Japanese were in at the start of it. When their Tamagotchi bleeped so plaint-



SIMON CALDER

... and I'd like to pay a special tribute to Bill Gates and all at Microsoft for developing the software that's enabled me electronically to dispatch these words all the way from Bogotá, Colombia.

Sorry - I was just getting carried away by the current gushing glut of gratitude that seems to accompany every new travel book. The author of the new *Cuba Handbook*, Sarah Cameron, pays tribute to her daughters, Katie and Jenny, "for their tolerance, encouragement and complete conviction that Mum's book is by far the best on Cuba".

Not wishing to venture too far along John Gummer and David Melfor's path of enlisting the support of one's offspring for the purpose of career advancement, I have been looking at the acknowledgements across a range of guidebooks. A surprising number read like the covers of Seventies' albums. For example, Mike Parker - one of the writers of the *Rough Guide to Wales* - offers "a huge dolch to Rhian Williams at the Wales Tourist Board", and thanks an intriguing list of individuals including Squidge, Dr Funkenstein and his co-author Paul Whitfield (the favour is not returned).

Across at Lonely Planet, the backscratching is mutual: one author of the guidebook to the Czech and Slovak Republics, John King, offers his co-author "mockrai dekuji to Richard for heroic work"; the response from Richard Nebesky is "last but not least, djk to John". Among this swath of acknowledgements I found myself wanting to find out more about the events leading up to the fulsome thanks paid to Michal Haidka of the Vratna dolina Mountain Rescue Service.

A similarly intriguing incident is alluded to by James Henderson, author of the *Cadogan Guide to the Caribbean and the Bahamas*: "Thanks also to all those at Cadogan who pulled this edition together and were (more or less) unfazed by the author's sudden departure for another continent". Mr Henderson casts his net rather wider in his gratitude to others: "My thanks go to all West Indians".

My gratitude will be limitless to anyone who can come up with a more comprehensive list than my 1982 edition of *Alternative London*, whose first page begins "Compiled with the help of friends, file-spies, moles, insiders, survivors..." and ends, after listing 70 other occupations, "... psychotherapists, philosophers". Not a word about children.

Finally, I'd like to thank my colleague, Harriet O'Brien, for attending the first-ever Virgin Atlantic Airways fear of flying course in Crawley last weekend, while I was otherwise engaged in the Colombian capital.

Some of the airlines around here take a rather different attitude to easing flyers' anxieties: in at the deep end. Looking at the accident statistics in this mountainous, stormy country, a fatalist might conclude that if you can survive a domestic flight here, you will be able to cope with aviation anywhere. You could call it a crash course.

The airlines here have even fewer frills than BA's new low-fare offshoot. Go - they don't even bother repainting their second-hand aircraft. I was alarmed to find that one scheduled aircraft on a domestic flight still bore the markings of a now-defunct British charter airline. The front cover of tickets issued by another carrier, Aces, bears a phone number and the invitation to call it to report "defectos de servicio". And the company ambitiously named Intercontinental promises it is the "Young Jet Airline", but I suspect that this doesn't refer to the DC-9 I flew on.

Thanks, anyway.



Double vision: inside the replica of the Holy House of Nazareth, at Walsingham. Photograph: John Voss

Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Easter is a crucial time for a small village in Norfolk where, over the centuries, religious significance has continued to build. By Sue Gaisford

When Dr Beeching took his famous axe to a branch line in Norfolk, he couldn't have guessed that his pruning would be so productive. Today, where once the regular service ran, a tiny, gleaming steam engine called the Norfolk Hero pulls visitors up a narrow-gauge track for five miles, from Wells-next-the-Sea to Little Walsingham. But they no longer alight at the old station, for that too has been reborn. Instead of withering rustily away, the diminutive Victorian building now proudly accommodates the Eastern Orthodox church of St Seraphim. Inside, in the soft light of thin, yellow tapers, the old booking-hall is full of spring flowers, glowing with sad-eyed, brightly painted saints; in what was probably the waiting-room, an icon workshop flourishes.

And that's not all. St Seraphim's is only one of three centres of Eastern Orthodoxy within a couple of miles. Take the road towards Snoring and turn off to the left, and you'll come to the minuscule hamlet of Great Walsingham, where in 1986 a handsome Methodist chapel became the Church of the Transfiguration. More of those distinctive icons decorate the rood screen - St Seraphim, again, St Withburga and St Fursey.

The third and smallest chapel was the first to open. It occupies an upper room in the Anglican shrine and originally

catered for locally held prisoners of war. That's an awful lot of orthodoxy for a small town in the middle of farmland, miles from anywhere. But Walsingham is a strange and, you might say, rather unorthodox spot.

In 1061, the Blessed Virgin appeared to a woman called Richeldis de Faverches and instructed her to build a replica of the Holy House of Nazareth, at Walsingham. Richeldis obeyed and, as the news of her vision spread, visitors began arriving. An Augustinian priory was built beside the Holy House, and its reputation grew. Miracles were reported: in the enormous flint wall surrounding the priory grounds there is still a little doorway, known as the Knight's Gate, barely 2ft high. They say that a knight was fleeing from his enemies who were right at his heels.

A despairing appeal to Our Lady of Walsingham resulted in his finding himself, and his horse, safely in sanctuary on the other side of the wall, and the baddies unable to pass through the tiny door.

All the mediaeval kings came here on pilgrimage, from Henry III up to and including Henry VIII. The shrine became second only to Rome as a major destination for pilgrims, and the town grew accordingly. But everything changed abruptly with the dissolution of the monasteries. The Holy House and its priory were pulled down and a famous statue of Mary sitting with her

child on her knee was smashed up; the great seal of the place, which showed a carving of the statue, disappeared.

No longer were new houses needed, so nobody bothered to pull down many of the old ones. As the place slipped back into insignificance, the buildings remained, dozens of superb examples of mediaeval and Tudor architecture lining the narrow streets - built of virtually every material available, from something that looks suspiciously like wattle and daub, through half-timbering, brick and flint to carved stone.

The place began to stir again towards the end of the 19th century when a Benedictine oblate called Charlotte Boyd discovered the Slipper Chapel. This perfect little church, built in 1525, was then in use as a cowshed, but it had originally been the place where pilgrims left their shoes to walk the last mile into town barefoot. From the print of the ancient seal, a new copy of the famous statue was made and installed in the Slipper Chapel, and pilgrimages recommenced.

These days, everyone has a stake in Walsingham. High Anglicans rebuilt the Holy House inside a new church and installed another statue: the abbey ruins were opened to the public and, gradually, the place reawakened. The Slipper Chapel became too small to take the numbers of Catholics flocking there, and in 1982 a new

church, a lofty building whose sweeping lines are taken from the design of old Norfolk barns, rose from the adjoining fields. There is also a rather splendid Methodist church where Wesley once preached, and the Sue Ryder foundation runs a hostel, a tea-room and a tiny hermitage. Religious souvenir shops abound.

In the Common Place is a well, sometimes grandly called the Conduit House. It is a hilarious little blob made of old bricks, chunks of limestone and sprouting grasses. On top of it is a mini-brazier where bonfires are lit to mark important events: there used to be a smart flint, but that collapsed in 1900, under the weight of the burning tied to it in celebration of the relief of Mafeking. This is the place where the Walsingham Witnesses tend to gather, to jeer at any evidence of the idolatry they despise, an atavistic dissenting pastime that is hard to imagine elsewhere.

At the Black Lion, a pub which once gave a bed to Philippa of Hainault, the wife of Edward III and friend of Chaucer, the talk was of spring. You can tell when it's arrived because the Easter pilgrims descend upon the town - young men carrying crosses. A sturdy farmer in a knitted cap was sitting at the bar, his upper lip adorned by the kind of long and lugubrious blond moustache that his Viking ancestors probably wore. He told us that there was

not a single family in the village which didn't benefit in some way from the increasing popularity of the place. But he grumbled, too, about the fact that parking restrictions were back in force now that the pilgrimage season had started, and that the village looked terrible with double yellow lines all down the street. A rumble of assent greeted this remark. How long had they been there? Oh, some years - couldn't say exactly. We'd have to ask Basil.

We'd already heard quite a bit about Basil. He was so old, they said, that he'd probably been there when Richeldis saw her vision. There was nothing he didn't know about the place; we could ask him anything. He'd probably turn up, they guessed, in a minute or two.

Basil didn't show up, and we had to go. The lane out of the town lies deep between hedges; on that quiet sunny morning, celandines and primroses brought a golden sheen to the bright new grass, giving the countryside the look of an illuminated manuscript. We reached Wells and turned westward. Here a forest of gnarled and twisted conifers called Abraham's Bosom protects the land from the encroaching sea. This was planted hundreds of years ago, some time during the last great heyday of Walsingham, but I'm not sure of the exact date. Next time, I must remember to ask Basil.

GREEN CHANNEL

If you're into habitat and wildlife conservation, and have always wanted to go on a field trip, but need technical guidance, help is at hand. The Royal Geographical Society's expeditionary advisory centre is organising workshops from 20-25 April that will introduce you to the golden rules of research on conservation expeditions world-wide.

The workshops are led by scientists from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, the National History Museum, BirdLife International, Fauna and Flora International, Harrison Zoological Museum, and the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester. You can learn how to assess endangered habitats, or how to survey wildlife, from the tiniest insects to the largest mammals.

Workshops in wildlife sound-recording and film-making are also being held.

If funding an expedition seems out of your league, you may be able to get help from the BP conservation programme. This week it will award £61,000 to 14 student research projects from around the world. Winners include a joint project between the University of East Anglia and the National Museum of Kenya to survey the Mount Kasigau forest - a precious habitat for endangered birds. Another is a joint project between Ecuador, Britain and Australian researchers, which will undertake zoological and environmental impact research in the Podocarpus National Park and the Rio Nangariza Valley in Ecuador.

Students in full or part-time education from anywhere in the world can submit proposals on conservation initiatives for next year's awards. But travellers do need more than a passing penchant for wildlife. The programme demands high standards of scientific research, projects must address a globally threatened species or habitat and the researcher must work closely with local communities.

For details of workshops, contact Louise Every at the Royal Geographical Society (0171-591 3030); e-mail: eoe@rgs.org. For information on applying to the BP Conservation Awards, contact BirdLife International (01223 277 318); e-mail: bp-conservation-prog@birdlife.org.uk.

Sue Wheat

RED CHANNEL

US State Department advice on travel in Turkey

For years, urban and rural acts of terrorism throughout Turkey have caused loss of life and injury to government officials, civilians and some foreign tourists. While most incidents have occurred in eastern Turkey, one terrorist group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claims to target tourist sites and tourist-oriented facilities in western Turkey as well, in an effort to inflict economic harm on the country.

In 1994, PKK bomb attacks at some of Istanbul's most popular tourist attractions, including St Sophia and the covered bazaar, resulted in the death of two foreign tourists. In August 1995, several bombings in Istanbul resulted in two

deaths and 36 injuries. Due to PKK bombings on local inter-city buses, travellers may be subject to security baggage-screening by the Turkish National Police.

Terrorist acts by the PKK continue throughout the eastern provinces. These attacks are against not only Turkish police and military installations, but also civilian targets, including public ground transport. Most attacks have been at night, but daytime incidents do occur. The PKK has kidnapped foreigners in eastern Turkey to generate media attention for their separatist cause. A number of foreigners, including Americans, have been held by the PKK and eventually released. In 1995, Mount Ararat was declared a special military zone; access is now prohibited.

The following provinces in the south-eastern part of the country have been under a state of emergency since 1978: Van, Hakkari, Sirnak, Batman, Tunceli, Diyarbakir, Silir, Bitlis, and Bingol. The provinces of Elazig, Mus and Mardin are considered "sensitive areas", and are designated one level below "state of emergency" status.

Travellers are cautioned not to accept letters, parcels or other items from strangers for delivery to the above areas. The same advice applies to requests to take items from those areas. There are indications that the PKK terrorist group has attempted to use foreigners for this purpose. If discovered, individuals could be arrested for aiding and abetting the PKK - a serious charge.

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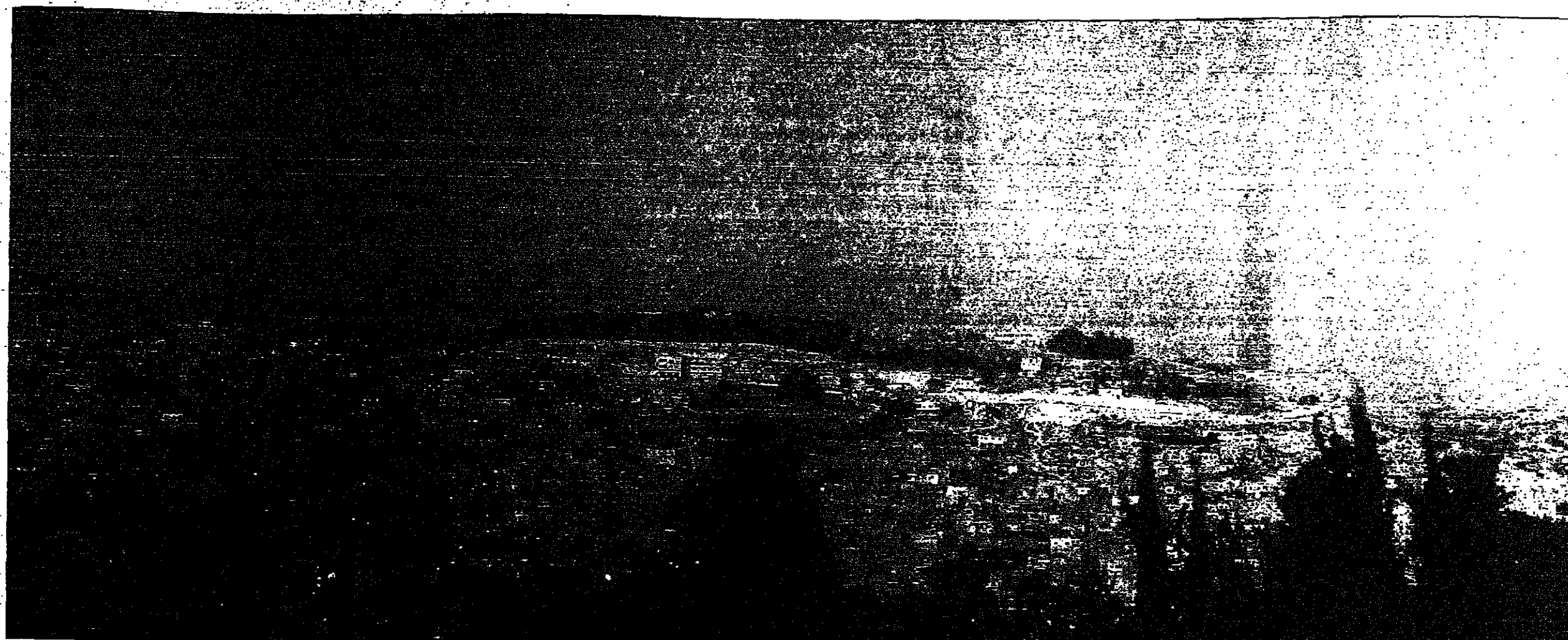
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48 hours in Jerusalem



For a crash course in monotheism – or just for a fascinating and sybaritic weekend exploring the cradle of Western culture, make for the Holy City, writes Alex Brodie

Why go now?

Easter is, of course, the time when the Christian faithful flock to the Holy City. And at this time of year in Jerusalem the weather can be perfect.

Beam down

El Al (0171-957 4100) flies scheduled from Heathrow and Stansted to Tel Aviv. British Airways (0345 222111) has services from Gatwick and Heathrow. Charter flights from London and Manchester to Tel Aviv and Eilat are widely available for around £200, through agents such as Pullman Holidays (0171-630 5111).

From Ben Gurion airport outside Tel Aviv, there are regular buses and shared taxis which take about an hour to reach Jerusalem.

Get your bearings

Jerusalem's streets are not based on logic. Nor, it seems, do they bear close relation to the maps available. Basically it's a divided city – east is Arab, west is Jewish, though Jewish settlement-building has somewhat blurred that. The Old City is walled, and divided into quarters by religion – Jewish, Muslim, Armenian. Outside it and running down to it (more or less) are the main streets in Jewish west Jerusalem – Jaffa Road – and in Arab east Jerusalem – Salah-din street. It is easy to get lost.

Check in

Just in east Jerusalem is the legendary American Colony Hotel (00 972 2 628 5171). It has nothing to do with America. It is English-owned, Swiss managed and Palestinian staffed. It was a pasha's palace, has a delightful courtyard and garden, and is the place to stay.

A cheaper alternative – with character – is the YMCA (00 972 2 625 711) in west Jerusalem, opposite the King David Hotel. (There's a Y in the east, too.) This has a good restaurant, and the terrace is a calm place in an often frenetic city.

Take in a view

Jerusalem is an intensely complex city, in its geography, politics, demography, religion and history. If you've just arrived, it can be difficult to get the measure of the place. There are two places to go at the start which will make the rest of what you see easier to understand.

Head for the Haas Promenade on the edge of West Jerusalem. It's a 10- or 15-minute taxi ride from the centre. You take the Bethlehem Road south and turn left. Suddenly all is laid out before you. You are looking across to the Old City – the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock may be shining in the sun. On your left is the modern capital of Israel. On the right is Arab east Jerusalem. On the hills around are the blocks of housing – the settlements the Israelis have built



Holy City: Jerusalem's skyline, top; at the Mount of Olives, left. Photographs: Richard Evans/Liaison (top) & E. Simar (above)

since 1967, to surround the city and consolidate their hold on it. Modern, recent and ancient history and legend are laid out before you. Pore over your map. Look at the names. The Bible story is out there.

In front of you and to the right of the old city is the Mount of Olives. Go there for a closer overview of the Old City and the Dome, with the new city behind. On the way stop on the ridge outside the Hebrew University and look west over the city and east to the desert, the Jordan valley and the hills of Jordan.

Take a walk

Time to plunge into the Old City. To get the full impact of this remarkable place, and what made it, go to the three shrines of the three religions which have competed, and still do, for Jerusalem. They're all within a very short walk of each other.

The Western Wall (please don't call it the "Wailing" wall), Judaism's holiest shrine, is all that remains of the Temple of

Solomon. Above, on the site of that temple, is Islam's third holiest site (after Mecca and Medina) the Haram-al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) which contains Al Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. A few hundred yards away is Christianity's shrine, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on what is reputed to be the site of Christ's crucifixion and burial.

Marvel at how close they all are, and how this really is the crucible of monotheistic religious faith (and intolerance). Bear in mind that the rivalry is within the faiths, not just between them. As you walk around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre you will pass through the areas possessed by six branches of Christianity: the Latin Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, the Armenians, the Syrians, the Copts and the Ethiopians (presumably the last in, as they ended up on the roof). Each jealously guards its territory. And at busy times – such as Easter – these men of God have been known to thump each other, and the

temporal power, currently Israel, has had to send in riot police to separate them. To do all three holy sites, you need to start early, because tourists are allowed on to the Haram-al-Sharif only during the morning.

Lunch on the run

There are many cafés in the Old City. For the best coffee, look for the ones inhabited by locals in the Muslim quarter. Follow your nose for barbecuing kebabs. Here, or in the Jewish quarter, seek out the hummus that looks as if it's made on the premises, with whole chick peas and tahina.

Window shopping

Palestinian pottery is a good buy – the little bowls and vases make excellent presents. To get the best hand-painted stuff go to the pottery outside the Old City, opposite the East Jerusalem YMCA near St George's Cathedral. Pottery in more modern design is made by an Armenian potter called Hagop. Go to the Armenian quarter of the Old City, near the Patriarchate, and ask for him.

An aperitif

Finks is an eccentric little bar in West Jerusalem, on a street corner near the top of the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall. Before the – surprisingly recent – explosion of drinking places in west Jerusalem, Finks was the only real bar. It's a piece of central Europe in the Middle East – and if the weather's cold, you can warm up there with their goulash soup. In east Jerusalem, go to the American Colony Hotel. In winter, try the cellar bar; in summer, make for the bar in the garden. Both alternatives are under the guidance of Ibrahim, a prince among barmen – a teetotaler who understands drink. The American Colony is a

place for appreciative individual travellers, and is not cheap.

Dinner

Go to either of the above, or, for wonderful fresh fish brought up daily from the coast, make for Ocean next to Beit Agron in west Jerusalem. It's expensive. Kebabs and Arabic *meze* are good at East Jerusalem's Az-Zahara Hotel. There's a terrace if it's hot, and even an open fire inside.

Sunday morning: go to church

Jerusalem is a very rich diet. After the extravagances of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, you may appreciate a simple, impressive and rather more spiritual place. This is the 12th-century St Anne's Church, built by the Crusaders. It's just inside St Stephen's gate in the Muslim quarter of the Old City.

A note of caution

Remember, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict persists and Jerusalem is a bitterly divided city. Tourists have, by and large, not been targeted, but violence is always likely.

The icing on the cake

Birds. In spring Israel is one of the most crowded routes in the world for birds flying between Africa and northern Europe. The best chance of seeing flocks is on the coastal plain on the way to and from the airport, and in the Jordan valley (half an hour from Jerusalem). Down there, watch the phone wires by the road for bee-eaters, which are seen as a glorious splash of bright greens and blues.

Alex Brodie is a presenter on Radio 4 and the BBC World Service, and a former Middle East Correspondent of the BBC

Two wings and a prayer ...

Can't get out. No control. Turbulence. Toilet problems. We were sitting in a seminar room in Horley calmly listing anxieties at one of Virgin Atlantic's new "Flying without Fear" one-day courses.

Toilet problems? Most of us looked puzzled. This contribution, it later transpired, came from one participant who once airborne would beat a terrified path to the loo and bolt up the fear for as long as possible – acknowledging, once back on the ground, that this was not only irrational but also highly inconvenient to fellow passengers.

Others, meanwhile, related similar symptoms of panic. The 20 course participants were a mixed bunch: several were fairly frequent flyers who would regularly, and grumpily, sit through their ordeal (their holidays ruined by dread of the return trip); one had never been in a plane; and some admitted to near-phobia of even entering an airport. Perhaps significantly, there were only four men on the course; it is not, came the quick explanation, that women are necessarily more neurotic than men, it's simply that without macho constraints they tend to be more open and practical about their fears. For my own part, I had been invited as an observer, but one who hoped to gain from the experience – despite an in-built wanderlust, I had recently found myself increasingly uneasy about air travel.

Anxiety over flying is a common problem. We were assured, affecting one in every five people. The course, they said, was designed to eliminate such fears totally – but, they added, even if it didn't completely cure us, we would feel a great deal happier about air travel – provided that we took a flight within two months.

And there lay the paradox: the day's fear-busting did not include a flight itself (unlike similar courses held by several other airlines). The Virgin staff were keen to stress that this was a rehearsal – keeping pressure and apprehension off participants. It also, they explained, enabled group numbers to be kept small (unlike other courses) so that all questions and all anxieties had a chance of being aired.

So how were they going to be convincing, without presenting us with the final challenge?

Harriet O'Brien joined some white-knuckled passengers facing phobia on a Virgin Atlantic non-flight

First off was a session with Norman Lees, one of Virgin's pilots, who heroically (and with an air of missionary zeal) undertook the job of explaining the basics about aerodynamics and the construction of an aeroplane – all within about two hours.

Whoops, you might think, stodge stuff. In fact this turned out to be gently reassuring: we learnt why it is that a wing *couldn't* ever just fall off a plane, how 350-plus tons of aircraft actually get off the ground, and how and why aircraft bank (the tilt is never more than 30 degrees, even if you feel as if you've suddenly and involuntarily joined the Red Arrows). And above all we learnt, repeatedly, about the built-in redundancy factor of the average 747 (as flown by Virgin) – four hydraulics systems where only one is really needed, two methods of getting the landing-gear down when only one is necessary, four engines although the plane *could* get by with one, two pilots ...

Most reassuring of all was being played a tape of engine noises, with accompanying explanations: the high level of noise just before take-off; the unnerving thump as the wheels are retracted and the undercarriage doors close; the sudden change in volume as engine power is reduced.

Commonly held and deeply rooted fears were also put to rest – "No amount of turbulence on this planet can cause an aircraft to break up," said Captain Lees firmly. And as for total engine failure, this is now extremely unlikely: "The only five occasions when all four engines have cut out have all been over volcanic ash – and, of course, we now have forecasts for volcanic eruptions." Engines, he added, were repeatedly tested – even to the lengths of having frozen chickens thrown at them (presumably with the wrappers off) to simulate flying through flocks of big birds.

It was doubtless without any intended irony that chicken was on the menu for lunch. This was served in full airline packaging in an impressively realistic mock-up of an aircraft cabin – and contrary to my own flights of fantasy we really did eat lunch at lunch time, rather than a set of improbable meals at impossible times of the day.

Having dealt with the hard mechanics of flight, the afternoon was spent exploring the more touchy-feely mechanics of the mind. David Landau, an eminent psychoanalyst and Einstein lookalike with a velvet voice, dwelt on such notions as being in control and the need to get in touch "with the frightened child within". We were talked through methods of relaxation – and put this to the test back in the simulated cabin. Then, once we had been handed a party bag (complete with a relaxation tape) our course was over.

Had it worked? For my part, I certainly feel much happier about the prospect of air travel. And the others?

"Great," said one participant. "It was especially helpful getting hard facts from the pilot. I wasn't quite so convinced about all that mind stuff."

"Not really," said another, looking strained and tearful. "I still don't feel very positive."

"Well," said a third. "I wouldn't have come if we'd had to fly at the end – I'd have imagined that I couldn't have coped. Now I think I'd be prepared to give it a go."

For details of the next Virgin Atlantic course, which costs £99, call 01293 744664.

Several other airlines operate programmes for fearful flyers, all of which culminate in a "flight to nowhere". Britannia Airways (01582 424155) stages two courses a year at its East Midlands training centre; the next is on 18 April. The day includes the visit to the mock-up cabin used for training crews. The price is £130. A British Airways pilot, Captain Peter Hughes, holds regular courses. The next is at Heathrow on 18 April (£179), with another a week later in Manchester (£149). For bookings, call 0161-832 7972. Air 2000 also runs fear of flying courses; call 0161-745 4644 for details.

A train

The best international rail deal from Britain is the £77 ticket from London Waterloo to any station in Holland, through Eurostar (0345 303030). The bargains get even better once you're there: the price for a day-return ticket anywhere in Holland flattens out after 210km (130 miles), which means you can go anywhere you like and back for 67.50 guineas – about £20. So you could travel from Amsterdam to Maastricht or from The Hague to Groningen, on fast, regular and reliable trains. For little more than a round trip on the Gatwick Express.

A boat

A new, fast ferry starts running next month, saving travellers hours on a trip to France. P&O (0990 980980) is launching the Superstar Express from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, almost halving the existing five-hour crossing time by conventional vessels.

A plane

In the next couple of months, a range of unusual destinations will be introduced by Ryanair (0541 569569) from Stansted: Kristianstad in southern Sweden (from £109 return), Carcassonne in southern France (£119), and St Etienne near Lyon (£119). In Italy, the airline plans to serve Pisa, Rimini and Venice.

A room

As the trend to yet-more-automated lighthouses continues, you can stay in one of the most beautifully located in the British Isles. The Wicklow Lighthouse on the east coast of Ireland costs £450 per week until June; contact the Irish Landmark Trust (00 353 1 662 8425).

A drink

Four hundred million bottles of champagne will be drunk on New Year's Eve 1999, according to Richard Knight, author of the first travel guide to the event: *The Millennium Guide*, published this week by Trailblazer at £4.99. The biggest party is likely to be at the Copacabana Beach in Rio, rather than at the Millennium Dome in Greenwich.



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A meal

A Misset Lee supper is one of a range of activities organised by the Arthur Ransome Society, based in Cumbria (c/o Abbot Hall Gallery, Kendal LA9 4QT). There are also expeditions in search of Swallowdale, wherry trips on the Norfolk Broads and camping trips to Chichester Harbour.

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A month from now ...

... the Campen '98 outdoor show will be clearing up at Kempton Park racecourse, south west of London. A range of outdoor clothing and equipment companies will be on show from 8 to 10 May. For more information, call Nomad on 0181-884 7014.

A year from now ...

... the cruise ship *Victoria* will be sailing around the Caribbean and the Panama Canal. This 16-day P&O Cruise (0171-800 2222) begins and ends in Barbados.



Welcome to the Terror Tomb

For a neat package of thrills and fantasy, Kathy Harvey takes a trip to Chessington World of Adventures.

When you go through the turnstiles at Chessington World of Adventures you are not quite sure whether the noise inside is coming from the screaming monkeys, or from visitors enjoying the masochistic pleasures of the rides.

Chessington, part zoo, part adventure theme park, is bracing itself for around 10,000 visitors a day over the Easter holidays and is just completing the finishing touches to its newest attractions. Paula Hurst, head of design for the studios owned by the Tussauds Group (which in turn owns Chessington), has spent most of the month overseeing the work to "re-theme" some rides and design new ones. She's been with the group for 10 years, but admits that her perception of what children want from a theme park has been sharpened since the birth of her own children, five-and-a-half-year-old Jack, and George, now 18 months. "Jack was two and a half when I first brought him here and took him to the Toy Town area and the Children's Zoo. Now he can go on almost 75 per cent of the rides. When I take him on a ride it's like having the experience for the first time myself."

The latest test of Jack's stamina was the Terror Tomb, a ghost train ride with a story line based on the search for a precious emerald. "We told him it was all make-believe beforehand, in case he found it too scary, but he was fine and hasn't stopped talking about it since."

Attractions like these are aimed at children who are already immersed in TV culture. When the Tussauds group took over Chessington 10 years ago it agreed to keep the zoo, and this is still a big plus for families with very young children. There are the traditional sea lion, penguin and big cat attractions, but this year the fascination many children have for creepy-crawlies is being exploited with a Creepy Caves experience, featuring snakes, cockroaches and a rat run.

Having visited practically every theme park in Europe, Paula Hurst believes it is essential to create as much make-believe as possible.

"What you are, doing is satisfying the child's desire for fantasy. Children want fun, and an experience they couldn't have at home. And adults can become big kids again. I didn't realise how good it would be to scream my way round a ride until I tried it."

It is certainly true that worries about the mortgage are unlikely to be uppermost in your mind while you hang upside down during Chessington's most stomach-churning ride, Rameses Revenge. This holds victims in their seats and lifts them upside down to hang in the air, before plunging them into a spray of water. Then there's the Vampire, another "white knuckle" experience that whizzes you round a circuit at breakneck speed in cars shaped like bats. This year a new ride, the Rattlesnake, has been constructed: it takes you through a make-believe Mexican silver mine. Apparently this is only "pink knuckle" - so wimps and those prone to nausea should not worry too much about giving it a whirl.

For families with fearful youngsters, the advice is to start in the Toy Town area and progress towards more adventurous experiences. All the rides have a height restriction, and "family experiences" are dotted among the more hair-raising opportunities. The most popular in the park, Professor Burps Bubbleworks, is a fantasy fizzy drinks factory with coloured lights, music and a tunnel of water fountains. Paula says some children start off a bit nervous about the speed of the rides, but claims that once the adrenaline gets going and they enter into the fantasy spirit, they are keen to be more adventurous.

Ideas for each area of the park are forged in a monthly "think-tank" meeting with the art directors from the Tussauds studios and the marketing team. "Nine times out of 10 an idea gets nowhere, but it's a creative process, and it is essential if you want to develop fresh concepts."

The drive to give every area of the park a theme has resulted this year in a re-fit of the McDonald's restaurant, now designed to look like an enchanted forest. Paula waxes lyrical about the 22 tills and the visual entertainment on hand for those queuing for food. Perhaps if you are recovering from a half-hour wait for Rameses Revenge it is just what you need, or perhaps working at a theme park can affect your view of reality. Queuing is, of course, what every parent dreads at these places, and Chessington claims to have done all it can to soothe away the hassle involved. Long, winding paths snake through the darkness to the Terror Tomb, giving the waiting hordes a taste of what lies ahead, and the queue line to Rameses Revenge gives everyone a good view of the spectacular ride. Those who don't fancy hanging upside down while being soaked with water can drop out straightaway, and cut down the waiting time for everyone else.

Paula Hurst has advice for parents planning a trip to a theme park over the Easter period. "Make sure you plan it well, and try to get hold of a park map beforehand. When I was planning to take Jack to Chessington and Alton Towers, he spent days studying the map and knew exactly what he wanted to try. It's quite important to get a feel for the place before you arrive."

Chessington's own map has a handy "Thrillometer" chart marking out those rides which are too "intense" for the faint-hearted.

Chessington World of Adventures, Chessington, Surrey (01372 727227). Admission: adults £19, children £15, under-fours free. If it rains, you get a £7 money-back voucher on the way out (though by then you have probably been sprayed with so many fantasy fountains that the weather may be irrelevant). Open daily, 10am-5.15pm with last admission at 3pm. Nearest railway station: Teddington South (a 10-minute walk away). Two miles from junctions nine and 10 of the M25, south west of London.



Escape from reality: alongside the thrills, Chessington presents both adults and children with a make-believe world

Photograph: Emma Cartel

How to abseil away from your parents

"Hello Mudder, Hello Farder, why can't I go to Camp Grenada?"

"But darling, we're British. And besides, we've booked for our usual fortnight at that boarding house near Bognor. Remember the swing in the garden?"

"Mother look at me, I'm 14."

This is the time of year to look at your children and realise that they're capable of much more than is provided by the average family holiday. By all means go to Bognor, but don't overlook the chance to let the kids out on their own for a week or two. Consider, if you dare, the possibility of summer camp. And you'll need to book soon - such holidays are increasingly popular.

More and more parents are apparently willing to throw off

Summer camp offers children excitement and independence, says Deborah Jackson

their reservations and admit that an unaccompanied holiday is good for modern, molly-coddled children. According to Superchoice, the youngest major player in the market, parents are tired of restricting children's movements, playing chauffeur and saying no. An internal report on customer preferences concluded that "Many parents reminisce about the freedom that they enjoyed as children and are frustrated that their own children's freedom in the Nineties is more inhibited."

There is certainly nothing inhibited about holidays with headings like "Indiana Jones" (PGL), "Wet and Wild" (Camp Beaumont), and "Motor Mania" (Superchoice). But neither are they nostalgic. Don't expect your child to spend the week roaming the countryside and climbing trees in search of Enid Blyton-like adventure. On summer (or Easter) camp, the thrills come in carefully packaged half-day sessions, with qualified instructors and a balanced diet.

At PGL, for instance, the newest course is "Action Man", a themed challenge for six-to-11-year-olds. Brand-naming turns your average multi-activity

week into a team-building mission, not unlike corporate training. "Birdies of a Feather" is another new PGL offering which would appeal as much to the middle manager as to the teenager. It's a golf skills camp based at Court Farm near Ross-on-Wye, using professional coaches at South Herefordshire Golf Club. Both holidays tend to attract boys, while girls traditionally opt for drama and pony trekking, but the sales manager, Harry Town, is determined to rebuff any suggestion of sexism.

"Most of our courses get a good mix of boys and girls, who share a common interest in getting muddy and wet," he says. "At summer camp, all barriers of disability, race and gender are broken down. We also integrate children who speak different languages. On report forms, parents are pleased that children have made all sorts of friends." But while Action Man is promoted by a doll in Commando gear, rivals Camp Beaumont have decided to de-commission weapons this year.

In light of recent events, some parents felt they did not want their children to learn rifle

shooting," says Sue O'Brien, managing director of the Kingswood Group. "As we are trying to create a fun learning environment, we decided to stop the activity."

While parents are worrying about political correctness and safety, children are desperate for a return to the ancient rites of childhood: climbing, splashing and socialising. At Osmington Bay, one of Superchoice's two summer camps in the south of England, they have introduced real crag-climbing on Portland Island and built two 37-ft schooners so that younger children can learn how to sail. Now they can rediscover the joys of crawling, too, in the 100-ft Tunnel Trail.

"It's an underground initiative test with a maze of pipes, one as narrow as 18in," says Alistair Tulloch. "We introduce the children gently with the escape hatches open, but as they become more confident we replace the hatches, until it's pitch black. They play hide and seek and other games and they think it's brilliant. Although they can choose to participate above ground if they prefer, the vast majority of children love it down there. We sometimes have trouble coaxing them out at the end."

Both Superchoice sites have their own waterfront and a wide range of "Wet Wet Wet"

activities. Camp Beaumont has previously banned beach and water games for safety reasons, but this year the company has introduced a "Wet n' Wild" course on the Isle of Wight. It's already proving to be a hit. PGL, which has 41 years' experience, say the top three children's choices are abseiling, canoeing and motorsports; and activities

such as quad biking allow them to be the chauffeurs for once. "I think that's the really good thing about summer camp," says Sue O'Brien. "Children get to do things that are adventurous. We encourage them to go that little bit further, and with new friends around them, they have the chance to behave in new ways. Parents want children to

have fun in a safe environment. People send their children to the country to relive the freedoms they once had, which you can't get in a town."

"Parents say their children come home dirtier, fatter, more independent and more lively," adds PGL's Harry Town. And one more bonus is that they're exhausted, which is more than

you could say for a week in anyone's back garden.

Superchoice (01273 691100), prices from £225 for a week. Camp Beaumont (0870 609 6000), prices from £298 per week. PGL (01489 768768), prices from £209 per week. All these offer short breaks and sibling discounts.

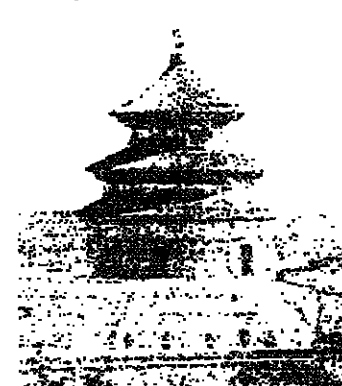
On the Tracks of Marco Polo

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This is a wonderful opportunity to visit some of the well known sights of ancient and contemporary China at a very moderate price. The journey commences with a non-stop flight by British Airways wide-bodied Boeing 747 from London Heathrow to Peking. In Peking stay at the 4-star Holiday Inn Lido Hotel for two nights on half board. Included during our stay are visits to the Great Wall, Ming Tombs, dinner at a local restaurant and a visit to the famous Peking Opera.

From Peking we fly to Shanghai for two nights at the 4-star Radisson SAS with a dine around allowance of \$12 dollars per person. In Shanghai are included visits to the Yu Garden, Jade Buddha Temple, Shanghai Art Museum, the Bund, Nanjing Road, dinner at a local restaurant followed by an acrobatic show.

From Shanghai we board the train and travel west to the Garden City of Suzhou, staying two nights at the 4-star Ester Hotel on half board. During our stay visit two of the most famous gardens. On our second day in Suzhou take a three-hour cruise by launch along the Grand Canal to the silk town of Wuxi returning by road in the evening to Suzhou. The following day return by road to Shanghai and fly



9 days from £750

to Peking in the morning and check-in once more at the Holiday Inn Lido Hotel. In the afternoon a visit is made to Tian an Men Square and the Forbidden City with a fare-

well Peking Duck banquet in the evening. The journey concludes with a return non-stop flight from Peking to Heathrow arriving later the same day.

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Where to revel in Ottoman splendour

Budget travel? Forget it – when in Istanbul, live like a sultan, writes Nicole Pope

Istanbul long had the reputation of being a destination for penniless travellers. In the Seventies, no self-respecting backpacker on the hippy trail to India would have failed to stop for a cheap meal at the legendary Pudding Shop on Sultanahmet Square. But Istanbul is also the city of Ottoman splendour, the ancient capital where sultans lived in such luxury that they were the envy of many European rulers. Today, despite the heavy traffic, despite the constant buzz of modern life in this city of 10 million, it is still possible to rediscover palatial life and recapture some of Istanbul's historic atmosphere. Do stop at the Pudding Shop, by all means, for decent food at a more than reasonable price: the old flea-pits still exist, mainly patronised by suitcase traders from the former Eastern block, but you should settle instead in style in one of the beautifully renovated hotels that now define the Istanbul experience.

The most unusual, and the most expensive, establishment has to be the Four Seasons Hotel. Wedged between Topkapi Palace and Hagia Sophia and beautifully combining traditional Ottoman furnishing with all the latest luxuries, it is located in a grand Ottoman building used as a prison until the Seventies. The poet Nazim Hikmet and the novelist Yasunari Kawabata, as well as other famous dissident intellectuals, were among the "guests". Several former inmates revisited the grounds when the hotel first opened and were startled by the spectacular change of decor.

More modestly priced, but also in the heart of the old city and leaning against the perimeter wall of Topkapi, are the Ayasofya Pensions – an entire street of small wooden houses painted in cheerful pastel colours and transformed by the

Touring Club of Turkey, which pioneered the renovation of derelict Ottoman houses for the use of tourists.

Others in that style include several small Ottoman *kohaks* renovated in recent years and offering intimacy and a glimpse of the old life. The tiny Ibrahim Pasha Hotel, with its 19 rooms, is a successful example of such conversion. The Yesil Ev Hotel also boasts an attractive shaded garden, a welcome spot to rest after an afternoon spent visiting the historic sites.

If you don't fancy being woken up by the call to prayer echoing from the mosques on Sultanahmet Square, you may prefer the banks of the Bosphorus, the famous straits that separate Europe from Asia. Nestled almost underneath the majestic Bosphorus suspension bridge, the Ciragan Palace Hotel, part of the Kempinsky chain, combines modern and old. The hotel section, which offers spacious rooms with a stunning view over the water, is new but the building next door was a genuine Ottoman palace before fire largely destroyed it in 1910.

When it comes to good food, you're in for a treat. Among the restaurants located in the rather garishly redone Ciragan Palace is the Tugra restaurant, which offers real Ottoman food. Turks are rightly proud of their cuisine, always cooked with the freshest ingredients and

delicate olive oil. Next to the splendid basilica of Saint-Saviour-in-Chorea, Asiane, located in the Kerrie Hotel, prepares unusual Ottoman recipes adapted to modern tastes with great creativity. Over the North gate of the Spice Bazaar is Pandeli's, with its delicious speciality of fish baked in paper.

For unique atmosphere, the Sarai (Cistern) restaurant, next to the Ayasofya Pensions, is unbeatable: the food may be fairly ordinary, the service a bit sloppy at times, but, in the flickering candlelight, the deep cathedral-like Byzantine cistern, furnished with massive wooden tables and heavy wrought-iron chandeliers, provides a truly amazing setting.

Sultans used to be taken across the Bosphorus in caïques, the long narrow rowing boats that can still be seen in the naval museum. You can – almost – replicate the experience by taking the

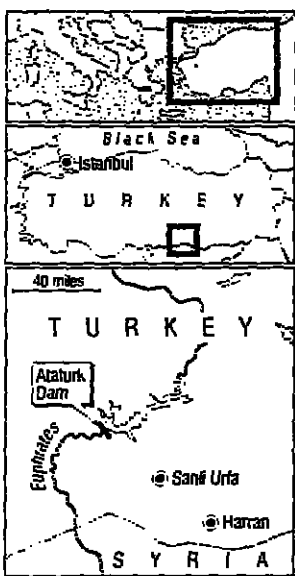
small boat that ferries diners across the straits for a meal at Kirfez. This up-market fish restaurant is justly famous for its sea-bass cooked in salt, and the romantic journey at night across the dark water only adds to the attraction. Closer to hand is Liman restaurant, which offers white-tie service overlooking a busy quayside about 200 yards north of the Galata Bridge over the Golden Horn. If you have exhausted the pleasures

of the covered bazaar, haggled over a carpet or two, and want to take home a reminder of your Ottoman experience, you could explore the narrow alleys of Cukurcuma, near Taksim square. Until recently a rather run-down area of town, Cukurcuma has been taken over by antique dealers. Shop after shop offers Ottoman relics, Anatolian carved doors, rich brocades, old clothes and paintings, all at prices that are inflating rapidly to match a growing interest in the Turkish past. But an afternoon spent sifting through dusty storerooms and dark corners filled with antiques could yield the treasured piece that will be a lasting reminder of old Istanbul.

Istanbul's five-star hotels usually quote prices excluding breakfast and the 15 per cent tax you'll need to pay. At the Four Seasons (tel: 00 90 1 638 8200; fax: 00 90 1 638 8210), prices range from \$270 (about £168) for a standard double room, to \$850 (£525) for a de luxe suite. At the Ciragan Palace Kempinsky (tel: 00 90 1 258 3377; fax: 00 90 1 259 6686) splendid seaside rooms start at \$280 (£173) for two, while the rooms with park view are \$210 (£130).

In a more modest category, prices start at \$100 (£62) for a double room at the back at the Ayasofya Pensions (tel: 00 90 1 513 3660; fax: 00 90 1 513 3669). The nicer front rooms cost \$120 (£74), while the suite is \$200 (£123). These prices include tax and breakfast.

At the Yesil Ev (tel: 00 90 1 517 6785; fax: 00 90 1 517 6780) a double room, including breakfast and tax, is \$150 (£93) while the Pasha Suite can be hired for \$240 (£148). The Ibrahim Pasha (tel: 00 90 1 518 0394; fax: 00 90 1 518 4457) offers double rooms for \$95 (£59), including tax and breakfast. A suite there will cost you \$135 (£83).



Istanbul's Blue Mosque, top, and the covered market, above. Photograph: John Voss

Advice worth a million

When in Turkey, change money in small amounts – and beware bus touts and minivans of retarded comfort. Simon Calder offers a survival guide

Money Do not change money in advance. The Turkish lira depreciates rapidly against all western European currencies – even sterling. Exchange rates in the UK rarely keep pace with the fall in value.

It is a much better plan to wait until you arrive, and then to change small amounts. You need only £3 to become a lira millionaire.

Banks keep short hours. If you can't find one open, souvenir shops and hotels will

give you reasonably competitive rates.

Getting there Frequent scheduled flights link London Heathrow with Istanbul. A return trip on British Airways (0345 222 111) or THY Turkish Airlines (0171-499 4499) costs around £250 including UK tax of £20.

Starting in a fortnight, there will be plenty of cheaper charter flights around, too. They have the advantage of serving a wider variety of airports –

predominantly Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman and Izmir on the Mediterranean coast. Check for late deals with a high street travel agent, or look at the advertisements on ITV Teletext.

You can expect to pay around £150 return (including tax), though cheaper last-minute bargains may be available.

To reach other places in Turkey by air, the best plan is to buy a through ticket, via Istanbul, on THY. The extra cost of a connecting flight to somewhere such as Adana near the Syrian border is not much higher than the standard return fare to Istanbul.

Getting in Because Britain levies a fee on Turkish visitors to the UK, British tourists have to pay £10 upon arrival for a visa.

Getting around Domestic flights on THY are relatively cheap (around £25 for the Istanbul-Ankara hop, for example), but the main mode of transport is the express bus. These are huge, air-conditioned conveyances with a courier who dispenses free soft drinks and *cavi de cologne* to passengers. On main routes, buses run frequently – at least every 15 minutes on the six-hour trip between Istanbul and Ankara.

Services are run by numerous competing companies, and at some of Turkey's liveliest bus

stations it is easy to be hijacked by a tout who steers you towards a particular operator; shrug off all offers of "help" and check all the ticket offices yourself before buying a ticket. Fares on long-distance runs tend to be around £1 per 100km (62 miles).

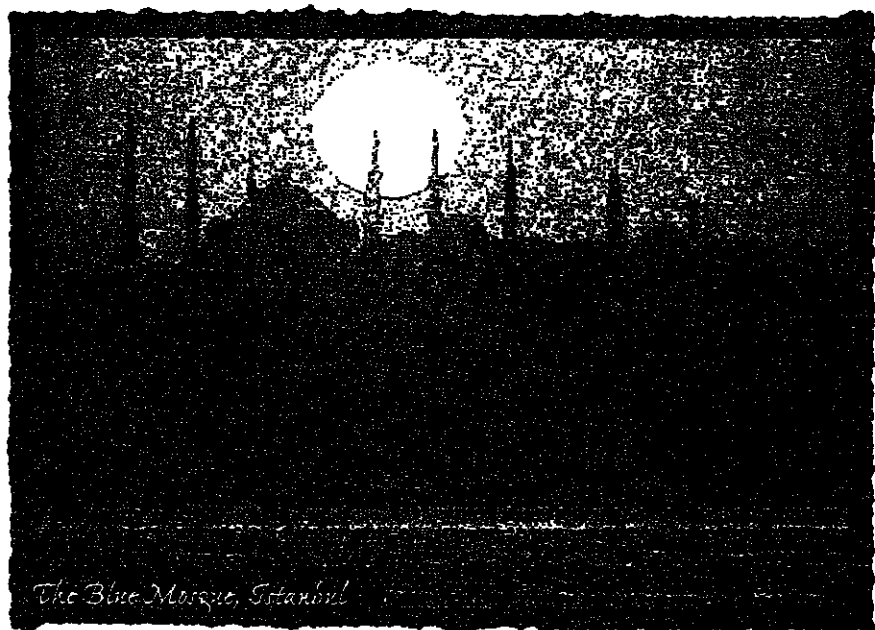
Shorter trips are operated by minibuses, usually of advanced years and retarded comfort. The name for this type of vehicle is *dolmus*, meaning "stuffed", which also applies to collective taxis – generally a stretched Mercedes which takes seven passengers on a good day.

Car hire is easy and relatively cheap, but roads in Turkey are dangerous if you are unused to the extravagant local styles of driving.

Rail travel has all but died out in the face of relentless competition from buses, but services on the main line east from Istanbul to Ankara and beyond have survived. See the Thomas Cook overseas timetable for details: this line is not included in the European timetable.

If you plan ahead, you need never pay for a Turkish map (unless you are hiking, and need some large-scale charts). The Turkish tourist office in the United Kingdom (on the first floor of Egyptian House, 170 Piccadilly, London W1V 9DD; telephone 0171-629 7771) has an excellent range of national, regional and city maps.

Great stories of the past...



The Blue Mosque, Istanbul

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From the sublime to the bazaar

Pat Yale tangles with Turks off the tourist trail in Urfa, and finds herself where east meets west

Earning a living in Turkey isn't always easy, even if you're a teacher. So it was that I bumped into Ozcan Arslan, an English teacher who was supplementing his salary by moonlighting as a tour operator.

I'd come to Urfa drawn by memories of a wonderful plane-tree-shaded tea garden. But my path to the Hotel Harran strayed past the door of Ozcan's shop, and before I knew it, there I was, sitting on a kilim-covered bench, sipping tea and having my itinerary reworked.

Ten years ago, Urfa was on the tourist trail that wound round eastern Turkey, but since then, the Gulf War and the Kurdish liberation struggle have frightened visitors away. No matter that Urfa keeps its nose pretty clean; it, too, gets the cold shoulder. Ozcan was running a one-man campaign to reinstate it on the tourist map.

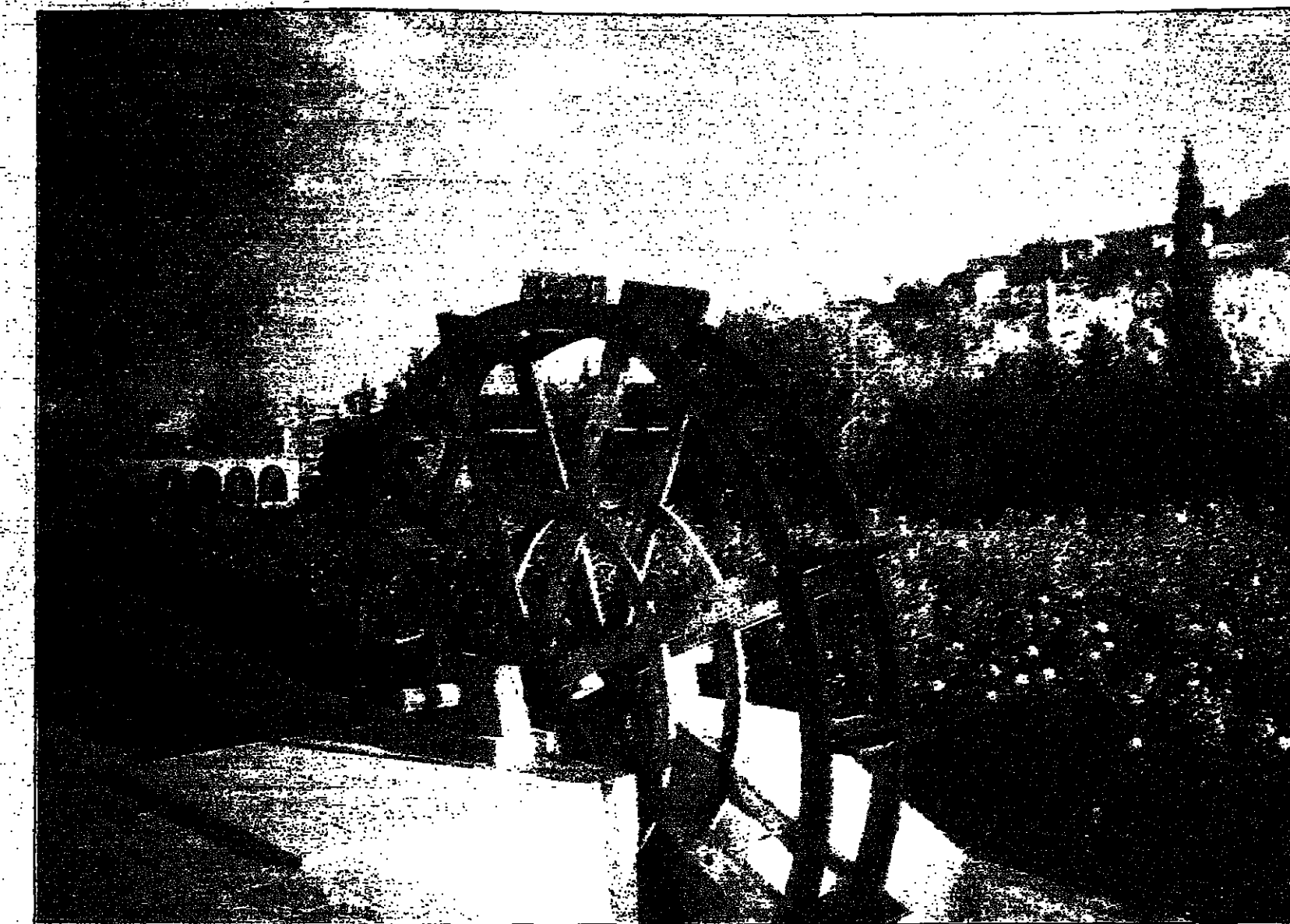
Like most visitors, I had my sights set on a quick foray south to Harran to inspect the famous beehive houses designed to a biblical blueprint, but Ozcan had other ideas. Tea finished, he whisked me off to get to grips with Urfa itself.

A lovely city of honey-coloured houses with stone tears dripping down their facades, Urfa is the perfect antidote to Turkey's coastal resorts, where looking for signs of anything particularly Turkish is as futile as searching for kebabs up Mount Everest. It's in Urfa, more than in modern Istanbul, that east really meets west, and the covered bazaar is an instant illustration, with black denims on sale alongside sheepskins, saddles and copious tinware.

Visitors to Turkey usually have a love-hate relationship with the carpet dealers, but in Urfa few tourists means no high-pressure sales tactics. In the bazaar, we inspected piles of bargain-priced carpets.

"People come here with their old rugs when they hit hard times," Ozcan explained. A sort of pawnshop system, then, which didn't stop me leaving with a delightful downy bag that had been unstitched to make a floor covering.

At the heart of the bazaar there were the plane trees, just as I remembered them, with the old men in flat caps perched on wooden chairs, playing *tutlu* as if their lives



Propheteering: the water wheel at Abraham's birthplace
Photograph: Pat Yale

attracted. Out east I was used to soaking alongside the locals, although I'd never yet heard a shade-of-the-playground hubbub like the one that emanated from behind this particular door.

Pushing it open, I found myself in a cavernous vestibule filled to overflowing with women and children. The noise level dipped momentarily as the occupants took in this unexpected apparition, but it was too late to back out. Within minutes I'd been stripped of my clothes and bundled into a bathhouse so chocha it was hard to find space to sit down. "It's cheap, you see," Ozcan later explained. "People take their lunch, make a day of it."

Ozcan had one final ace to play, and that was his excursion to Harran. It started with a drive to Sogmat, a tiny, all-but-forgotten desert village. There, in the gloom of the Pagnon Cave, we inspected spooky, life-size rock-cut figures in crescent crowns, relics of the equally all-but-forgotten cult of the moon god Sin.

From Sogmat we rattled along a dirt track through a landscape of browns, yellows and ochres. At a rare waterhole, the cows were chocolate brown, the shaggy-fleeced sheep a grubby fawn, and even the water was a murky treacle.

After the warm welcome we'd received in Sogmat, Harran's mobs of bonbon-demanding children were a dismal reminder of the likely long-term fallout from our adventuring. It was a shock, too, to bump back on to the Tarmac highway. Gone were the browns and yellows, replaced by shades of green, the cotton-bush legacy of the brand-new Atatürk Dam, cornerstone of Ankara's plan to make the desert bloom. Back in Urfa, Ozcan turned to me with a grin. Now, if I wanted to see the Atatürk Dam...

Harran-Nemrut Tours, Koprubasi Caddesi, Sanli Urfa (0990 414 215 1575). Day trip to Harran and around, \$15 (£9), assuming at least four people. **Hotel Harran, Atatürk Bulvarı, Sanliurfa (0990 414 313 2860).** To stay in an old Urfa house, try **Sanliurfa Valfilgi Konuk Evi, off Veli Fuat Bey Caddesi (09 90 414 215 9377).**

depended on it. Ozcan ordered glasses of *sahlep*, a milky drink that tastes like diluted custard, while I wrestled with sudden edginess, conscious that I was trespassing in a man's world.

In place of more conventional tourists, Urfa is full of devout Muslim pilgrims. According to legend, the prophet Abraham was born in a cave here. Leaving Ozcan to round-up other stray wanderers, I popped in to inspect the birthplace, expecting the reverential silence of a church. What I got was the atmosphere of a family picnic, and a vivid illustration of Urfa's crossroads

location. Half the women wore head-to-toe Iranian black. A few sported the glistening, colourful robes of Syria. A handful of westernised urbanites made me feel as over-dressed in trousers, long sleeves and headscarf as if I'd worn them to the beach.

Outside, the authorities have turned their back on the Turkish tradition of tearing down any half-way attractive old building and replacing it with a concrete high-rise. Instead, a delightful rose garden, irrigated in the ferocious sun by a wooden waterwheel, links the cave with Urfa's other holy of holies, the sacred carp pool. The

Abraham story reports how, after King Nimrod sentenced Abraham to be roasted alive for messing with his idols, God stepped in to turn the fire into water and the coals into fish. *Voilà*, the carp pool, where I handed over my lira for a tray of pellets to feed some of the world's most pampered pisciforms.

Above the pool stands a ruined castle, probably dating from the time when Urfa was Edessa. A quick look at the map says it all. Anyone wanting to reach Europe from the Middle East would have had to pass through Edessa which was occupied, in turn,

by Alexander the Great, the Romans and the Arabs. For a brief period it even masqueraded as the quirky European County of Edessa, a leftover from the first Crusade.

Ultimately it fell to the Seljuks, and then to the Ottomans who renamed it Urfa. The Sanli (pronounced "Shanli") which precedes it on signs is a relatively recent honorific, meaning "glorious".

With the wind whipping up a dust storm, I hotfooted it to the hammam. In western Turkey most baths, especially those for women, are little more than tourist

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Basket cases

Up, up and away ...
Eric Kendall reveals
how to stay cool in a
hot-air balloon

"I've started, so I'll finish" could be a balloon pilot's motto, along with "What goes up must come down". Landing, is where it's at with ballooning: it's the key issue.

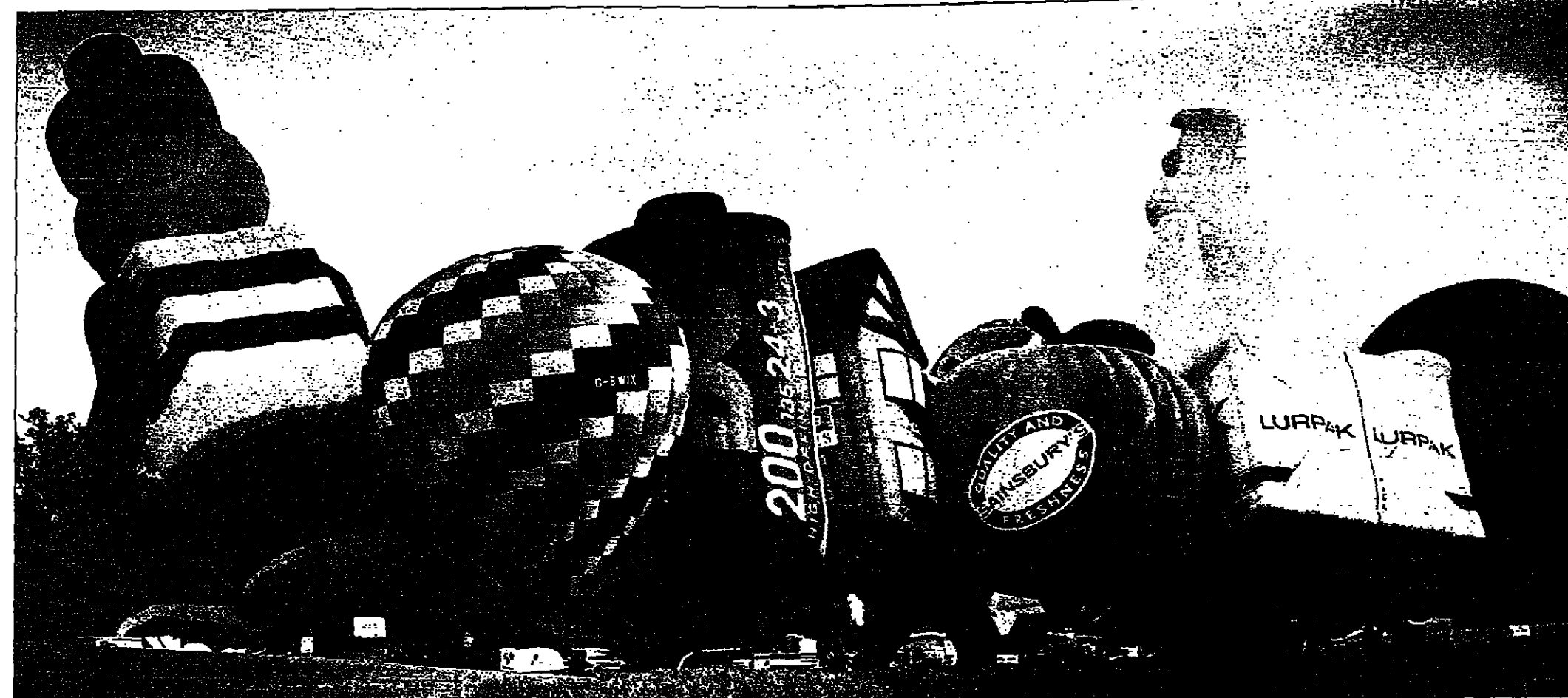
Landing conditions are in the pilot's mind well before he unfurls his balloon. You may not know exactly where you'll end up, but you need a clear idea of the direction and speed of travel. Closer attention is paid to Jan McCusker and Suzanne Charlton than may seem proper, the night before a flight. If winds are too high or gusty, getting away could be turbulent but landing could be disastrous: there are no air-brakes or squealing rubber on Tarmac to ease your touch-down. Hoping for the best isn't involved. It's got to be right. The final check, in contrast to the gravitas of the moment, is with a helium-filled party balloon, whose rate of ascent and direction of flight are scrutinised as it disappears into the distance.

Putting everything together is surprisingly simple: unravelling the "envelope" (balloon) which has a worrying hole in the top, attaching the basket, securing propane cylinders and testing the burner. The basics are easy to grasp (hot air rises) and anyone familiar with gas camping stoves should feel at home with the burners and related paraphernalia. Even the "quiet" jet used to reduce the startling effect that sudden roaring can have on livestock, is pretty impressive. It startled me every time.

With the envelope inflated first by a monster fan and then with the burner, things start to happen fast. Pre-take-off checks range from the technical (checking for holes) to the obvious but vital, such as ensuring that the chase vehicle keys are in the ignition, not the pilot's pocket. Straining at the leash, the balloon responds in a big way to any wind, bobbing and rolling, even pulling upwards as the wind blowing over the top of its curved surface produces "false lift".

Suddenly the quick release attaching us to a comfortably large Land Rover is detached, and we're experiencing real lift. The ground falls away as quickly as the air becomes still, but the bulk of the balloon above provides a monolithic sense of security. Never mind it is just hot air.

But anyway, there's no time for faffing around. Flying a balloon is a serious busi-



What goes up must come down - but lift-off in a balloon is a great deal easier than landing

Photograph: Philip Meech

ness, and once you've got going it's all happening, all of the time.

For an experienced pilot it's second nature: looking where you're heading, climbing and descending to check conditions at various altitudes, scanning the ground for livestock, checking the way ahead both through binoculars and on the map, and constantly reassessing conditions. But to a student pilot, you might as well be flying the space shuttle by the time you throw in fuel management, even having to switch lines between tanks, remembering to radio ground crew to let them know your route, and, of course, keeping an eye out for possible landing-spots from the moment you set off. And nothing's predetermined: you may have started with a flight plan, but it has to change with the conditions, requiring fast, decisive responses.

No wonder the instructor says that ballooning is good life training: there's no

touching it out, forcing things to go your way: the weather is bigger than you are.

Meanwhile, the views are stupendous and the calm (apart from that quiet burner) is unbroken, save for a niggling worry (to a novice) about the big hole in the top of the envelope. Admittedly it's plugged by a "parachute", a large piece of fabric held in place by air pressure, until its release on landing rapidly deflates the balloon. Apart from that you haven't a care in the world.

But far sooner than you'd think - time flies when you fly - it's time to descend. Even when you're up high, the ground seems to be zooming by, and the lower you are, the faster it goes. Though a balloon pilot's naturally optimistic outlook makes the whole world a landing-strip, punctuated by obstacles such as power lines and houses, in practice you need to land where you'll do little damage, preferably in a set-aside field.

So you pick your spot and go for it - you can't come round a second time. Aim for the start of the field, "rounding out" with a burn at 40ft to level off a couple of feet from the ground, then pull the red line to deflate the balloon, through that hole in the top. All you can do is hold on tight, bend your knees (you'll probably be feeling weak there anyway) and try to ignore the feeling of a total lack of control. It's the moment when it all comes together with a bang: balloon, earth and the contents of the basket. If you're doing more than about 8 knots it goes straight over, leaving everyone in a tangle and giggling helplessly. Like ballooning itself, the ending is unpredictable: you never know who'll end up in your arms. It's definitely the friendliest way to fly.

Thanks to student pilot Emily Wilson, instructor Thomas Wilson (of Wizard Balloons) and ground crew Cathy and Colin Leeder

LEARNING TO HARNESS HOT AIR

A minimum of 16 hours' dual flight training are required for a private pilot's licence, which allows you to pilot a balloon unsupervised. In practice it usually takes four to six months. Learning about crops and livestock is an important element of the training. People also become involved with ballooning by acting as ground crew, helping to launch, chase and retrieve the balloon.

Early mornings and late afternoons, when winds are generally light, are the normal times to fly. Whether learning or "joy-riding", boots are ideal for coping with muddy fields, and clothing made of natural fibres is a good idea. Big hairdos with lots of hairspray aren't - the burner is within reach and very hot.

Catching fire is not an issue for the balloon itself; the relevant parts are made from fire-resistant material.

The British Balloon & Airship Club is the governing body of the sport (01792 899777). Contact them if you want to become involved as ground crew or learn to fly balloons. The British Association of Balloon Operators (01789 488100) can provide details of member operators. Wizard Balloons in Norfolk (01379 898989) are available for passenger flights and to learn to fly. They also have details of a balloon four-wheel-drive safari in Tunisia in November. To learn to fly abroad, try the Lindstrand Balloon School in Spain (fax: 00 34 5287 7249).

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Green and pleasant pedigree

Crisp topiary, rambling
camellias, proud parterres
– **Anna Pavord** offers a
guide to gardens to visit

Like anyone else who is interested in gardens, I carry around in my pockets and work bags a grubby collection of vaguely horticultural notes scribbled on the backs of envelopes. "Remember *Prunus vedovizis*," said one I excavated recently. Remember in what sense, though? Is this a ghastly cherry that I must never think of planting in our garden? Or is it so wonderful that I can't do without it a moment longer? Having read it up in W J Bean's *Trees and Shrubs*, I'd guess the second.

There are notes about places, too. "Must get to Heale to see the magnolia." That's Heale House at Middle Woodford, one of my favourite gardens in England (open daily 10am-5pm, admission £2.75), where a vast *Magnolia x soulangeana* frames a genuine Japanese tea-house straddling a tributary of the Avon. There are also notes about gardens that I don't know, but that other people have recommended to me: Tapeley Park at Instow in Devon (open daily except Saturdays, 10am-5pm, admission £2.80) owned by the son of the Chrises at Glyndebourne. That's on my list of places to visit this year.

But what I like best of all is dropping in on places that I know absolutely nothing about. It happened this week when I called at East Bergholt Place, at East Bergholt in Suffolk. Fifteen-acre garden originally laid out at the beginning of the century by the present owner's great-grandfather," said the brief description in the *National Gardens Scheme Guide*. "Particularly beautiful in spring when the rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias are in full flower. That's the kind of description that would fit dozens of gardens in the West Country, but it's not what you expect to find in Suffolk. Rupert Eley, who has recently taken the garden in hand, explains that his great-grandfather was a cousin of the Williams family of Caerhays and Lanarth in Cornwall. He was also the first secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society's Rhododendron Group, and subscribed to George Forrest's plant-hunting expeditions in China and Tibet. This is a garden with a pedigree.

It was very run down when Rupert Eley and his wife, Sara, took it on, and there is still a huge amount of work to do here. The storms of 1987 and 1990 took away many of the trees that were sheltering the old rhododendrons. The long-term cover has to be slowly re-established. The formal areas round the house had become slightly shaggy. Now the topiary is in crisp shape and the elegant rill that runs from a square pond down the backbone of the garden has been cleared ready for replanting.

This is all costly work and the Eleys are subsidising it through the nursery that they have laid out inside the brick walls of the old kitchen garden. They keep a brilliant range of trees and shrubs, and I came away with a fine *Magnolia delavayi* with evergreen, peltate-shaped foliage, and a holly, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Myrtifolia', which has elegantly etiolated leaves.

He's set out on a lonely road, young Rupert Eley, with everybody around now buzzing about herbaceous plants and few people understanding trees and shrubs. I admire him for that, and for his ability to think ahead 30 or 40 years, when the trees he is planting will just be starting to make something of themselves. The garden is open Tuesday to Sunday and bank holiday Mondays (10am-5pm, admission £1.50). Don't expect a showpiece. Enjoy the magnolias and ponder on the strangeness of a Cornish garden transplanted, soul intact, to England's eastern rim.

Long Close at Woodhouse Eaves, Leicestershire, was another chance find. From the outside, the garden gives nothing away. The house sits close to the road that runs through the middle of the village, protected by a high stone wall. Inside, the ground falls gently away to the north, with the garden at first terraced into formal lawns and a grass tennis court, separated by long herbaceous borders. Beyond the tennis court, the

er. Big, rambling camellias lined a walk down the left-hand side of the enclosure. Toadflax and moss spread over the stone steps and paths. Moss filled the lawns, too. This made them blissfully soft to walk on (though I know that some gardeners would be sucking their teeth and nutting over that). A snowdrop tree, *Halesia monticola*, was just coming into flower, and old-fashioned cultivars of rhododendron such as 'Dragonfly' were making their unheeded way into bud.

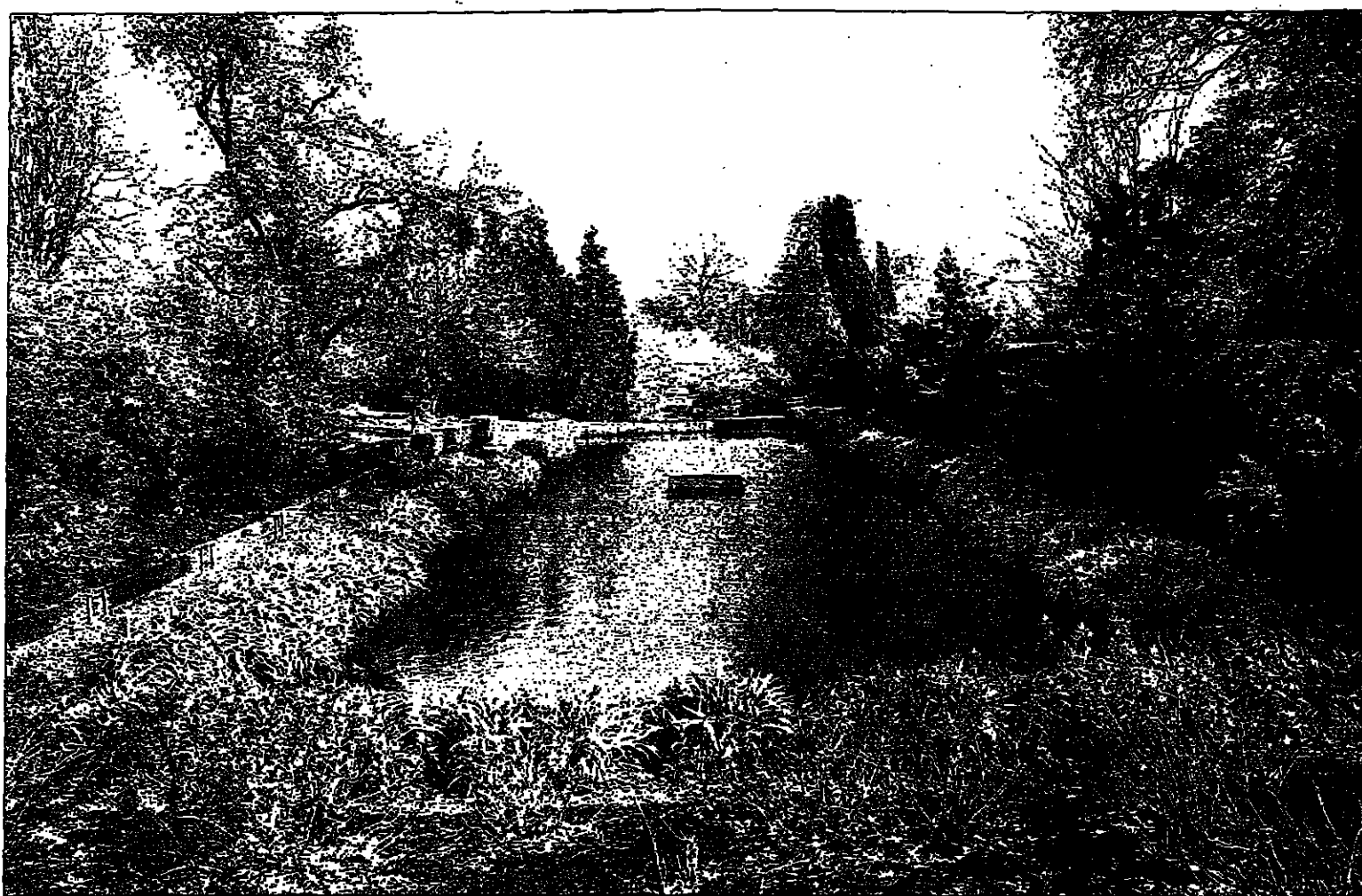
Down at the bottom of the garden, when the house seems miles behind you, there is a serene view out over water meadows bounded by hawthorn hedges. The tower of Old Woodhouse church rises in the distance – pure Constable. The meadows belong to the house and are managed in agreement with the *Countryside Commission to encourage wild flowers*. That's a treat to come in June. Meanwhile, Long Close is open daily from Monday to Saturday (9.30am-1pm and 2-5.30pm, admission £2).

For a real showpiece, go to Waddesdon, between Bicester and Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The garden is little changed from the one laid out towards the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild and his French landscape designer, Elie Lainé. The estate was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957, but much of the recent restoration work has been initiated by the present Lord Rothschild.

His daughter Beth, who trained at Kew, is responsible for the design and replanting of the staggering parterre on the south side of the house. It is at its best now, swilling with the scent of golden wallflowers set against brilliant blue pansies. Gold and blue are the Rothschild racing colours.

The scale and standard of gardening here are both equally breathtaking. Ten thousand lilies of the valley have been planted with camassias in the woodland garden. Eighty-five thousand spring- and autumn-flowering crocuses have been set along the ash tree walk. Nine thousand wallflower plants were used in the parterre and nine thousand black tulips are just about to burst into flower alongside them.

If you get a chance, visit the newly opened bachelor's wing in the house, if only to catch sight of the immaculate little roof garden, which gives on to the smoking-room. Clipped Portulacal sets in fine Versailles boxes stand in the four corners, and the walls are covered with green-painted trellis, carefully carpentered to fit round the windows. The knot garden that fills the centre is made from box planted in long, coffin-shaped troughs. It's a model for anyone who is trying to grow plants in an impossible place. The garden at Waddesdon Manor is open Wednesday to Sunday and bank holiday Mondays (10am-5pm, admission to the garden only, £3).



English idyll: above and below, the gardens of East Bergholt Place in Suffolk

Photograph: Emma Boam

CUTTINGS

"A relative gave us a few Jerusalem artichokes, which after two years number many hundreds," writes Honor Fringle, of Wolverhampton. "However, they are terribly knobby, and trying to skin them is more than hard work. I seem to remember once seeing an advertisement for artichokes that weren't knobby. Can you tell me what they are called, and where I can get them?"

'Fuscau' is the variety that Mrs Pringle should look for, and it is available (at £6.25 for 25 tubers) from SE Marshall & Co Ltd, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2RF (Orderline 019435 466711).

Three study days are on offer at the Oxford Botanic Garden this summer, starting on 9 May with "The Structure of Flowers". Amateur botanists will have the expert guidance of the garden's superintendent, Timothy Walker, but the course is geared towards potential artists, with tuition from the botanical illustrator Rosemary Wispé. The next study day (30 May) focuses on euphorbias, and Alan Radcliffe-Smith of Kew will give a definitive guide on the best way to grow and use the huge family of spurge. The study days, which run from 10am to 4pm, cost £25 each. For further information, contact Louise Allen, University of Oxford Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AX (01865 276921).

Head gardener Richard Eyres is leading a series of master classes this year at Anglessey Abbey, the National Trust's garden in Cambridgeshire. The next class (which deals with care of lawns and maintenance of mowers) will be held on 21 May at 6.30pm. Each master class costs £5 and tickets are available from Anglessey Abbey, Lode, Cambridge CB5 9EJ (01223 811200).

WEEKEND WORK

April is a good time to plant conifers, but in exposed areas, protect newly planted specimens with a windbreak. Water well in dry spells.

Summer-flowering bulbs, such as camassia and galtonia, are on sale now. Both are well worth having. Camassia will naturalise in grass, sending up thick blue spikes of flower in June and July. They are happiest in heavy, damp soil. Set the bulbs 4in deep. If planting in grass, the easiest way is to start the bulbs off in pots and transplant when the green shoots are growing strongly. Chop out turves about 1ft square and plant the bulbs in the spaces, topped up with fresh earth.

Galtonias need more mollycoddling. These send up thick, stiff stems at least 3ft high, covered with white flowers like enormous hyacinths. Plant the bulbs about 6in deep and 1ft apart.

Trim winter-flowering heathers, taking care not to cut into old growths. Low-growing branches can be layered to produce new plants. Scoop out a little hollow and bend the branch into it, securing it with a hoop of wire or a stogie.

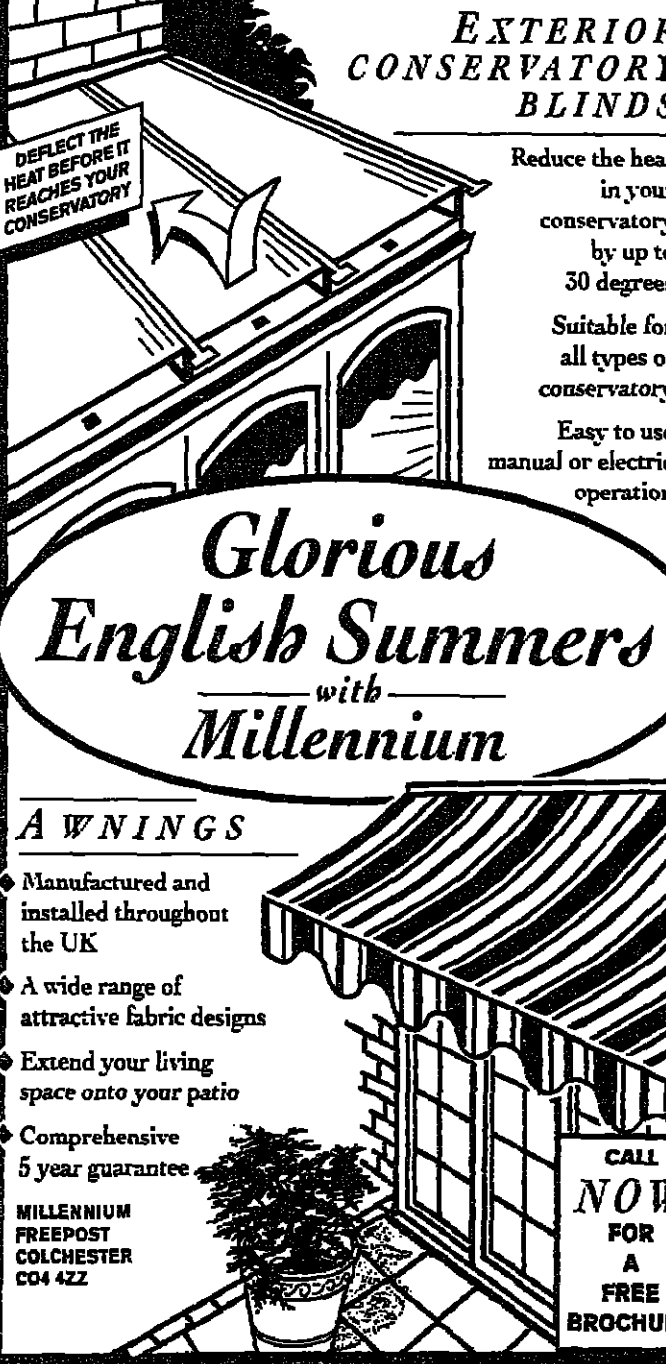
Continue to plant vegetables, where the soil is dry and easily worked. I have just put in radish 'Ribella' (Marshall's, 83p), the giant winter leek 'Wila' (Marshall's, £1.23), and a new looseleaf lettuce called 'Frisby' (Dobbies, 92p), which has curly, crunchy leaves that you can harvest over a long period, and is slow to run to seed.

Anna Payard

GARDENING

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Nature note

One unmistakable sound of early spring is the territorial drumming of greater and lesser spotted woodpeckers. The curiously mechanical noise - brrrrrrp, brrrrrrp, like short bursts of machine-gun fire - is caused by male birds hammering their beaks on dead branches to warn off other males and advertise to females that a desirable customer is in occupation of the tree. The beak-strokes are incredibly rapid - a lesser spotted woodpecker has been timed putting in 33 hits in 1.3 seconds - and both species have an in-built cushion at the base of the bill to stop the shock of the impacts being transmitted to the brain.

When it comes to hacking out a nest-hole, the birds adopt different tactics. By experimental tapping they find points at which trunks or branches are rotten and, therefore, suitable for excavation; then they bore and chip away as quietly as possible, so that they do not attract the attention of predators.

Spotted woodpeckers are small, slim birds, mottled black and white, and males have small crimson caps. Greater spotted are only about 9in long, lesser spotted less than 6in long. Green woodpeckers, their large cousins - both sexes of which are red-capped - do not drum territorially, but all three species share the same looping, undulating flight.

Duff Hart-Davis

What, when, where ...



How far can you hurl a haggis? Head for the Cairngorm Mountains on Easter Sunday and discover more about this arcane activity from members of the Order of the Crumbs at the annual haggis-hurling competition at Nethy Bridge. In the evening you could dine on six courses at the Abernethy Highland Banquet, attended by Dougal McDougal of Dougal, and have an opportunity to twirl afterwards in the eightsome reel.

The haggis-hurling competition takes place at 10.30am on 12 April at the Nethybridge Hotel, Nethy Bridge, Inverness-shire, PH25 3DP (04779 821203). Entry for the competition costs 50p a throw, with the proceeds going to Cairngorm Mountain Rescue.

Sally Kindberg

Months away from the mint sauce

The lambing season is an exhausting time for any farmer who keeps sheep, but somehow it is most traumatic if you have only a few ewes, as we do. In a flock of hundreds, no matter how humane and careful a shepherd is, he (or she) simply has no time to dispense much individual care or sympathy. With only a dozen animals, on the other hand, you know most, if not all, of them by name, and cannot help becoming personally involved with their problems.

Experience has taught us to watch the ewes closely in the final days of pregnancy. So long as they stick together, we can be fairly sure that no birth is imminent; but as soon as one goes off to some secluded corner, we know that her time is almost up. If the weather is reasonable our policy is to leave expectant mothers alone, out in the field, while they are producing. Only if they seem to be in trouble do we intervene - and then, when the lambs are born, we bring the families into a barn divided by hur-

When you know each sheep personally, you can really lose your appetite at lambing time, writes Duff Hart-Davis

dies into small nursery pens, so that the infants can gain strength and the families bond together.

This year began auspiciously. The first two ewes to produce both gave birth to twins during the night, and there were no complications. Then came a set of triplets - a mixed blessing. On the face of things, it seems splendid to have got three lambs from one mother; the trouble is, she has only two teats, and even if she has the instinctive skill to rotate her offspring so that all can feed, there is a risk that the strain of suckling will bring on mastitis - a disease that can be cured if caught in time, but which may easily put one side of the udder out of action, thus effectively ending the ewe's breeding career.

After the good beginning, things went downhill. A singleton lamb died within hours of birth, apparently of hypothermia; and as the mother had almost no milk, she could not foster any orphan that later events might create. Then another ewe rejected the first of her new-born twins, butting it away whenever it tried to approach. The only way to save it was to bring it into the kitchen and install it beside the Aga.

At first it wouldn't drink from a bottle. When it did start to suck at a rubber teat, it seemed to inhale the milk, and developed a rattle in chest. My wife rushed it to the vet, who diagnosed pneumonia, but reckoned the animal had a chance and gave it an antibiotic injection. For reasons too complicat-

ed to explain, we named the little ram Sophocles. Now we had to take a tough decision: he would do better with a companion, and the best bet all round seemed to be to filch one of the triplets from its mother. This we did, taking elaborate precautions so that the ewe would not hear her snatched baby bleating. So Sylvia - white as snow after thorough maternal washings - also came to live in the kitchen.

For a few days progress was agonisingly slow. Neither lamb seemed to realise that milk was the difference between life and death. But soon both saw my wife clearly as a foster-mother, and followed her round like little dogs.

Outside, things were going better. One ewe went into labour early in the morning, and after several hours appeared to have exhausted herself, with only the lamb's front feet showing. But when we tried to bring her in, she raced about so wildly that we felt sure the lamb must be dead. Not at all: with me

restraining at the front and my wife manipulating at the back, she brought forth not just one fine big ram lamb, but a second as well.

Finally all the ewes bar one had done their stuff. Only Jenny was left. Early one morning we were thrilled to see her cleaning up a lamb in the nearest paddock. Alas - when we brought her in, I found the leg of another, severed at the hip. We could imagine what had happened all too clearly: while she was having the second, a fox had nipped in and killed the first. No wonder she was intensely possessive of the survivor.

So our fortunes have been up and down. Our two orphans, established in a crèche of straw-bales in the yard, are doing well. The kitchen floor has been scrubbed as never before. We, though, are condemned to a routine of four-hourly bottle feeds for weeks to come, and saddled with two surrogate children, so sweet that they will be hard to sell and impossible to eat.

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A twig in the house-buyer's beak

Houses look their best in spring, so Easter should be a busy time for buyers and sellers.

Ginetta Vedrickas talks to some of those involved

Take a holiday now and you can't guarantee the weather. But you can be sure you won't be sitting next to an estate agent on the plane. Spring has sprung, traditionally an agent's busiest time of year, when hefty commissions are no longer mere fantasy. Will the house hunt take preference over the egg hunt this Easter weekend?

You may find Joanna Haddon-Knowles, of the Muswell Hill estate agency JHK, on the beach, although she prefers February, "when it's really miserable here". Joanna believes that the spring season has less influence now than in previous years: "In our area schools are the driving factor, and people even look in August to get into a good state school for September."

Post-Christmas has more significance than Easter for Joanna: "That is when things go berserk. People have either survived Christmas together and decide to buy somewhere, or have had such a terrible time that they never want another like it, so they start divorce proceedings and sell the house."

Conversely, in Hertfordshire commuter-land, Neil Guilfoyle, of Trend and Thomas, is "looking forward to more improvement" after a sluggish start to the year, and expects to be busy over the Easter weekend. Why is spring a classic time to buy? "Traditionally it's a favoured time simply because everything looks better," he says. His strongest current demand is for homes in the price range £250,000-£350,000.

After seeing several years of "erratic fluctuations" in the market



Shaftesbury, Dorset: spring is traditionally a busy time for home buyers, but many larger agencies take a break

Photograph: Ian Murphy/Tony Stone Worldwide

Colin Fitzgerald, Hampton's director for Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire, believes we are entering a more stable period with traditionally seasonal ebbs and flows, but adds a cautious note: "Compared to last year our volume of valuations is up."

So why aren't people buying?

"I'm afraid many clients' price expectations are stuck in the past," he says. "We've sold a property, and found that when the house next door comes up for sale six months later there just isn't the interest there was for the first house. Interest is building, giving buyers more choice, so vendors must price realistically."

Many agents believe that low interest rates will continue for the rest of the year, and have welcomed Gordon Brown's "safe as houses" Budget. Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, says the Chancellor

"has given people hope of continued market recovery and stability", bringing an optimistic feel to the spring season. But what are buyers looking for?

Hampton's is seeing interest in "character properties requiring work but with roses round the door", prov-

ing that spring is a time when a young man's fancy also turns to DIY. Well presented homes are at their best at this time of year. "An early spring has played its part, and vendors have been lavishing attention on their properties to make sure they can be seen in their full glory," says Gavin

West, director of western regions for Hampton's.

With "seasonality" back in vogue, would an underling dare take their holiday now? "Only the foolhardy would do that," says Gavin, who claims to love work so much that he confines vacations to Christmas alone. One agent, who asked to remain nameless, says: "I'm dying for a week away, but I know it won't go down well in the office so I'm planning a dodgy stomach in April. It will mean slapping on the old white foundation again before returning to work."

The Budget was kind, and the market looks optimistic. All is beautiful in the garden, but some buyers and sellers do not have a spring in their step. Clare Lederer put her two-bedroom flat in Upper Norwood, south London, on the market in October and found a buyer within the week. She viewed a house she liked, and made an offer which was accepted.

Clare hoped to have moved by Christmas, and didn't in her wildest dreams imagine spending Easter in her old flat. "I just didn't think it could go on this long," says Clare, who, because of a set of unrelated problems, has discovered her third buyer has dropped out and her vendor will wait no longer: "We've got until Friday. It's so stressful, a complete nightmare."

How does she plan to spend Easter? "I'm putting the flat back on the market, so I'll be showing people round and hope to get another buyer quickly." Clare will not look for another house until her situation is resolved, to spare herself further disappointment. But are agencies open for viewings over Easter?

Mark Coulter, negotiator for Chestertons in Tower Bridge, won't be at his desk, preferring to spend the weekend in the Cotswolds. Does he worry about losing sales? "No. Most people want to relax, and will be away. You'll probably find the smaller agencies open, but they have to try harder to establish themselves," says Mark, with the confidence of an agent who believes that spring has finally arrived.

How to get away from it all – in your garden



A summer house is the perfect place for painting, writing or simply relaxing with a gin and tonic, writes Rosalind Russell

George Bernard Shaw wrote in one. Charles Dickens described them as "sweet retreats which humane men erect for the accommodation of spiders". And garden designer Gertrude Jekyll used to sit in hers to watch the progress of a storm. A summer house is to the thinker what the humble garden shed is to the doer. And a lot more expensive.

While you might expect to pay around £500 for a 6 ft x 3 ft shed, a summer house, with seating, can cost upwards of £2,000.

"Mothers who come and sit in ours at shows say they'd love to have one for themselves... and allow no children in," says Zoe Docherty, of Scotts of Thrapston. "A summer house is a wonderful place to relax in. They are popular with people who paint, write or just like somewhere to sit with a gin and tonic. They are also a popular present for a special wedding anniversary."

You do need a big enough garden to put one in, of course. Keen gardener and actress Susan Hampshire learns her lines in her summer house in Oxfordshire, accompanied by her pet

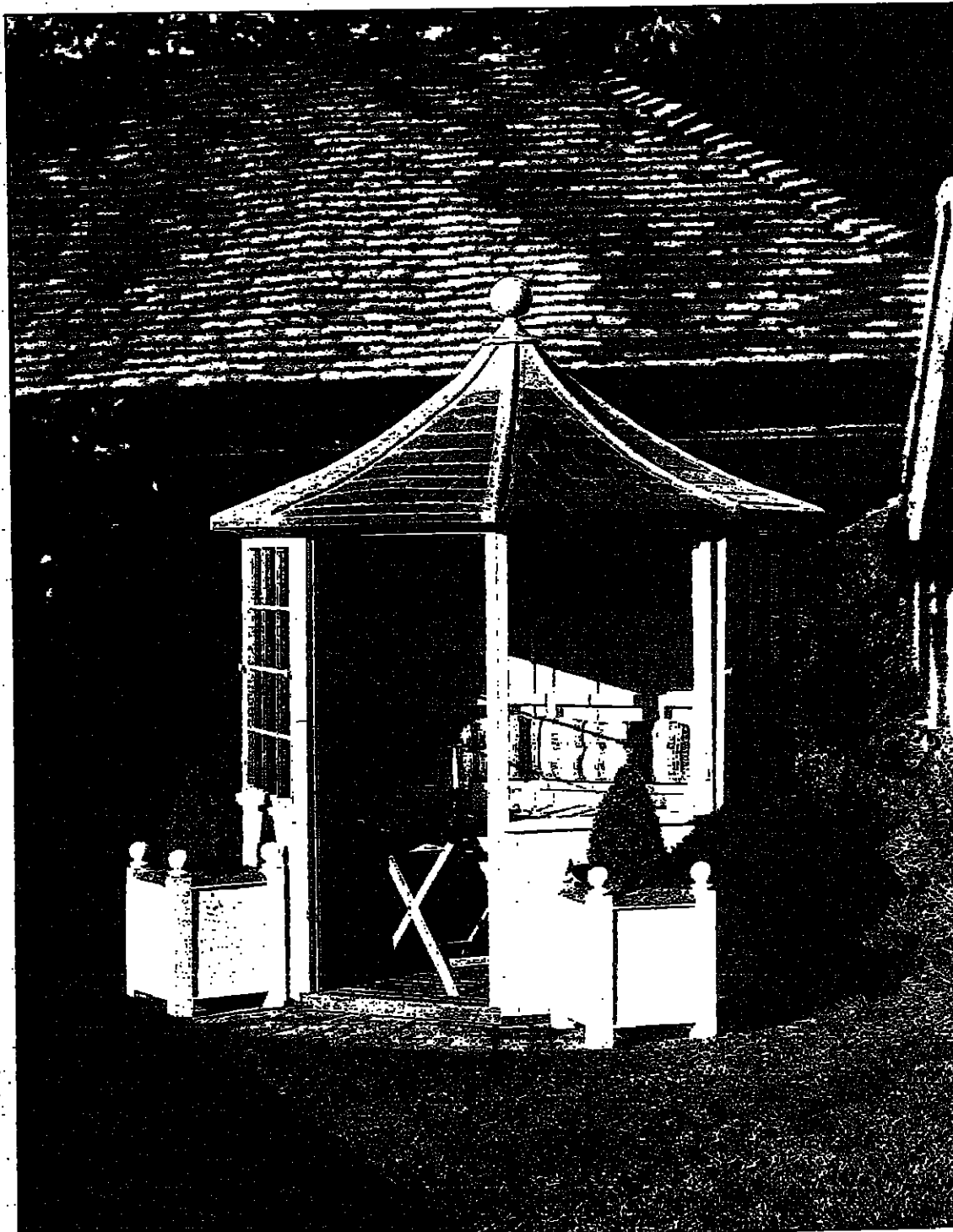
hens. Singer Chrissie Hynde loves her gazebo so much that she says it's not included in the sale of her house in St John's Wood, north London (currently on the market at £895,000).

Gazebos are more open than summer houses, often with trellis work sides for climbing plants, while summer houses are usually lockable – but both are perfect for a spot of peace and quiet with a good book, hopefully out of sight and sound of family and telephone. Scott's version, which closes up with a shutter system, is a halfway house.

This year the company launched its Sunseeker Shaker gazebo, stained in cream with detailing picked out in blue. It has shelving for glasses and bottles, blue-and-white upholstery, a tented ceiling and even a butler's tray. The whole outfit costs £2,400, but their other gazebos cost £2,050, including all the accessories. The most popular colour is a green stain which needs reapplying every seven years.

As an option the company can supply a turntable at £400, which can revolve the gazebo to take advantage of the sun at any hour of the day (timers skirting is included to hide the gear mechanism). For chillier days, a small electric heater can be fitted for an extra £250. The range is going down well in Japan – which has a long tradition of garden houses for the tea drinking ceremony – where English country gardens are the latest must-have among glossy home magazine readers.

Susan Hampshire bought her summer house from Amdega, where prices start from around £3,000. Built from solid Canadian western red cedar,



Peace of summer: 'A wonderful place to relax', say Scotts of Thrapston (above); Susan Hampshire (above left) uses her summer house by Amdega to learn her lines

Amdega models are painted or stained to order. The windows and doors have leaded glass, interior walls are lined in oak, and the roofs are tiled with cedar shingles. Amdega's new range of botanical colours includes racier shades than usual, including eryngium blue, zinnia red and a very jolly wisteria lilac, but the usual shades are available for those who prefer to have their summer house blend into its natural surroundings.

Amdega also offers a revolving turntable as an option and will make an initial site visit free of charge.

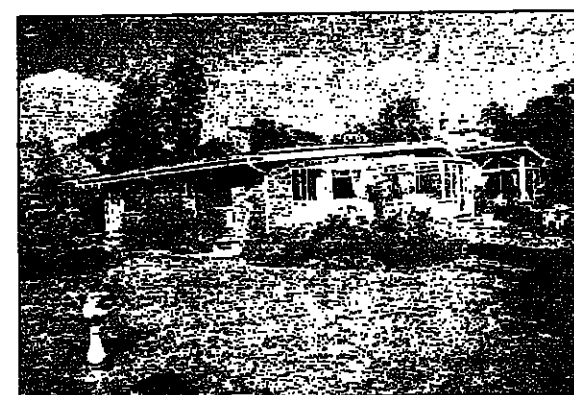
A summer house needn't be entirely ruled out by those of slender means. B&Q's summer houses start at a penny under £700 for the octagonal design – 6 ft by 6 ft by 7 ft 2 ins high – with Georgian-style windows. The cornerhouse design at 7 ft by 7 ft by 7 ft, with two large opening windows, costs £749.99, and the biggest – at 8 ft high – is £849.99.

They are made of tongue and groove shiplap cladding, fully treated with a golden brown finish, and include hardware and felt but no accessories. There is a 10-year guarantee against rot and free home delivery.

Both Scotts and Amdega will be exhibiting at the Chelsea Flower Show next month.

Scotts of Thrapston 01832 732366; Amdega 0800 591 523; B&Q (for nearest store) 0181 466 4166.

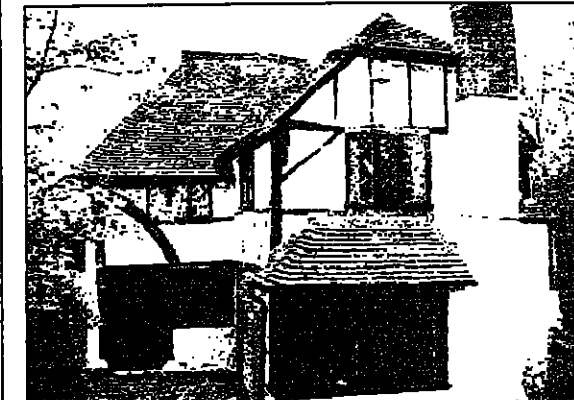
THREE TO VIEW: WITH SUMMER HOUSES



Piccolo, two miles from Beccles, in Norfolk, is a single-story house built in 1968, designed so the main rooms overlook the gardens. A paved path around the four-bedroom house leads to a 24 ft by 12 ft summer house – big enough to double as a studio. The house comes with two reception rooms, a large kitchen/breakfast room and a conservatory. A 15 ft study with pine-panelled ceiling has a French door to the gardens. Recently renovated, with new doors and windows, central heating, barbeques and guttering, it's for sale through Strutt & Parker for £185,000 (01603 617431).



Black Cottage, in High Halden, Kent, is Grade II listed, with a 20 ft beamed drawing-room with inglenook fireplace and French doors to the rear gardens. Outside, the gardens include a summer house, a greenhouse, a garden shed, a built-in barbecue and a garage. The 18th-century cottage has four bedrooms (one of which also has an inglenook fireplace) and a 19 ft kitchen with a solid-fuel Rayburn. Agents GA Town & Country are asking £210,000 (01580 763636).



The Old House, in Pulborough, West Sussex, is being sold by the professional tennis player Douglas Emery, who is moving with his wife to Australia. The 15th-century Grade II* listed two-bedroom cottage's gardens feature a 14 ft by 9 ft summer house with views across the Arun valley. But the garden has also given up some historically important relics which are now in Worthing Museum. The house and grounds have been widely illustrated in guides to Sussex. Guide price is £155,000 through Guy Leonard & Co (01798 874033).

Mellow yellow

The taste of ... saffron from Spain. It's the most expensive spice in the world – and not only does it soothe the nerves, it also aids fertility, claims Nikki Spencer

The central plateau of Castilla La Mancha in Spain is the major commercial saffron-growing area in the world, but, if you were to visit the region, it's quite likely that you wouldn't guess it.

"The thing about cultivating saffron is that for most of the year there is not much to see," says John Humphries, author of *The Essential Saffron Companion*. "Then when the crocus flowers do appear, in late October or early November, they're picked on the day they bloom so that the stigmas are at their best."

"It's a bit of a case of blink and you miss it. I've even met local people who've lived in the area for years who haven't ever seen a saffron crocus in the ground."

The altitude on the plain, more than 1,000 metres, provides the extreme conditions in which saffron thrives. In the summer the temperatures soar above 40°C, and in winter they drop to below freezing point.

Saffron is harvested by hand. It is back-breaking work, and the scale of the operation explains why this is the most expensive spice in the world. From each flower just three stigmas are picked and dried; it takes the stigmas from at least 70,000 flowers to make 1lb of saffron.

Once the harvest is over, the Fiesta de la Rosa del Azufre is held in Spain's saffron capital, Consuegra. Local people dress up in traditional costume and wear crocus flowers on their lapels. As well as singing and dancing, one of the features of the day is the annual saffron-plucking com-

petition. The fastest person to remove the stigmas from 100 crocus flowers is the winner.

Saffron in Britain

● You don't have to go to Spain – or even Turkey, Iran or Kashmir – to see saffron flowers in bloom. You can follow Caroline Ridden's example and grow your own. Caroline started growing saffron on her farm near Wrexham, in north Wales, in the Eighties, and now she sells her saffron commercially. Caroline says there is no reason why saffron can't be cultivated here – after all, until the 1800s, it was grown in places such as Saffron Walden. For more information send an a/c to Caroline Ridden, Caerestyn Farm, Rhydyddyn Hill, Caergwrle, Wrexham LL12 9EF.

● Phoenician traders took saffron as far as Cornwall, where it was apparently traded for tin, and a tradition for cakes and buns has survived until the present day. Now one Cornish baker, Warren from St Just near Penzance, is offering "saffron by post" – traditional Cornish saffron cake, which the company will send all over the world (call 01736 788538).

● *The Essential Saffron Companion* by John Humphries (Crub Street, £14.99) includes recipes, and there's an entire chapter on medicinal uses of the spice. Saffron contains high quantities of riboflavin, which is believed to be good for the nerves – and in folklore it's said to aid fertility and clear the heart. Crocin, the yellow dye, has been the subject of research into anti-cancer agents.



Blink and you'll miss it: the saffron crocus in bloom

Photograph: RHPL

Where style and comfort mix

The stuff of ... the ultimate eastern glamour. Sally Staples visits Egg

For women in their thirties and forties who no longer conform to model sizes, and care about stylish comfort rather than slavish fashion, Egg is heaven sent. This extraordinary shop, on the site of a 19th-century dairy in a quiet residential street at the back of Harvey Nichols in Knightsbridge, London, has attracted a steady stream of loyal clients, including Barbra Streisand and Donna Karan.

When a few paragraphs appeared in *The New York Times* mentioning that Ms Karan had scooped up a collection of clothes from Egg, dozens of American tourists arrived at the door, holding up the cutting in awe and panting to see the collections.

Inside, Egg does not resemble a shop, and certainly not a high-fashion boutique. White-washed walls with blue tiles – remnants from dairy days – and a cobbled floor provide a background on which the owner, Maureen Doherty, has draped her intriguing collection.

Maureen, in partnership with the designer Asha Sarabhai, has concentrated on using natural fabrics in plain colours. Spring shades of white and indigo will gradually give way to pastel shades of pink, purple and mauve in the summer. The predominant designs are from India and China, and coats, jackets, dresses and drawstring trousers – you really can try clothes on after eating lunch – are made in hand-woven cotton, linen and silk.

A popular seller is the Khadi

cotton shift based on a French design for a work shirt, which looks like the kind of artist's smock often worn over trousers. Indian designs based on a man's straight-cut coat are regularly bought by women; they sell for £160 in hand-woven cotton, and up to £640 in silk. For hand-embroidered silk coats the price can rise to nearly £2,000; many of these are bought for weddings. While the clothes are undoubtedly unique, most of Egg's clients are women, though men favour the Mandarin-style round collared jackets. Also available are tie-dyed scarves, woven bamboo Indonesian fishing bags, pin-tucked silk cushions, embroidered cotton bedspreads and practical ceramic pottery.

Katie Acomley, a sales assistant, explains that the concept of Egg grew because Maureen felt there was a need for shops that didn't follow fashion to extremes and reinvented themselves every month. "Women need a place where they are made to feel welcome. Our clients often spend hours trying things on, and friends meet here to shop together. There are no assistants who make them feel inhibited, and, yes, we do offer people a cup of tea. We may be just behind Harvey Nichols, but it is a quiet street and customers can feel they are away from the bustle of the city."

Egg is at 36, Kensington Street, London, SW1X 8ES (0171-235-9315). Open Tuesday-Saturday 10am-6pm.

GAMES

GOATS AND CARS: THE FINAL EPISODE WILLIAM HARTSTON

I had hoped not to have to return to the topic of goats and cars, but the amount of post I have received on the subject has made a final visit inevitable. Statisticians, mathematicians and accountants have written in to tell me that it's all perfectly obvious, and I should never have been taken in by the paradox, and they don't see what the problem is. But even more probabilists, actuaries and goal-lovers have written to say that we've all got the answer wrong anyway. So here, back by public demand, is definitely the last appearance of the Great Goats and Cars paradox. Let me take a deep breath and see if I can finally explain it.

To recap: A quizmaster offers a contestant the choice of three doors. One hides the star prize of a new car, the other two conceal only goats. Contestant selects door; quizmaster (who knows where the car is hidden) then opens one of the other two doors to reveal a goat. Then he offers the contestant the chance to change his mind. Should he do so?

Most people say it makes no difference. The choice is now reduced to two doors and there's a one-in-two chance the car is behind each.

WRONG. WRONG. WRONG! The truth is that a change of mind doubles your chance of winning. And for all who still do not see why, here are two final efforts to explain it.

1: After the door has been opened, you have two options: to change your mind or stick with your original choice. If you stick with your original choice, you will win if and only if your original choice was correct. If you change your mind you will win if and only if your original choice was wrong. Your original guess will be right only on one of three occasions: it will be wrong on two out of three. So changing your mind will secure the prize on two out of three occasions, while sticking to your original choice will locate the car only one in three times.

If that doesn't totally convince you, try this: 2: Look at the original choice not as a simple selection of one door, but as dividing the doors into two groups: Group A, the one door you chose; and Group B, the other two doors. The quizmaster now offers you the choice between Group A and Group B. If you pick Group A, you win the car if it's behind that one door; if you pick Group B you win the

car if it's behind either door in the group. Put that way, it's perfectly obvious that you should pick Group B – you have twice the chance because it has two doors rather than one.

But that's exactly the same as the game we started with. Only by eliminating one of the doors in Group B, the quizmaster makes it look just like Group A – two identical-looking doors – but because of the preamble, they are far from probabilistically equivalent.

If anyone is still unconvinced, I can only suggest that they get someone else to play the game with them, hiding something at random under one of three cups. Try both strategies and you will soon see that changing your mind produces results twice as good as not doing so.

And to the many who wrote to chastise me for being bemused by a perfectly simple probabilistic calculation, let me plead that you have misunderstood my bemusement. What perplexes me is the psychological aspect of how easy it is to be taken in by this paradox. The answer, as most of the post-bag has confirmed, is definitely counter-intuitive, but I still don't completely understand why.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY PANDORA MELLY

Charles Secrett, 44, director, *Friends of the Earth*

I play pretty much anything with my son Max, who's 10. Football, building models, you name it. Our favourite board-games are Risk and Monopoly, and the beauty of those two is that you've got to think strategically.

In Risk, the continents are divided up into countries and regions, and the objective of the game is to conquer the world using a certain number of soldiers, cannon and cavalry.

I'm an environmentalist, committed to peaceful and democratic change. But there's always something a bit intoxicating about pretending that you're in charge of an army. Risk is rather old-fashioned, which helps to take the sting out of it. A modern warfare version with nuclear weapons would be abhorrent.

I like games in which everyone becomes pretty well equal after a bit of practice; and where there are opportunities for alliances, so that you can have co-operation as well as competition. Monopoly is a good example of this, particularly if everyone agrees to bend the rules a little. If someone's

having a hard time and you want to keep the game going – well, give them a break; perhaps let them off a little bit of rent.

There's a lot of strategic game-playing involved in the work I do. So much of what we're trying to achieve is possible only through persuading government, industry or society at large to do things differently. It's all about outwitting opponents, building alliances, and having convincing objectives.

The way you play reveals a great deal about who you are. Whether it's real life or a board game, it is vital to have a moral code ensuring that everyone plays fairly and in an honest and courageous way, rather than with Machiavellian subterfuge. Game-playing usually brings out the best or the worst in people. It all depends how you handle it.

The 'Batman & Robin' collector's edition of Monopoly is available only from the Warner Bros shop in Regent Street, for £25. Or you may prefer to put the money towards adult membership of Friends of the Earth for £21 (concessional, £10) or a joint family membership, £29 (0171-490-1555 for details).

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

You would get a better idea of the progress of a chess game if they were scored like football matches. A dull and uneventful draw could be described as 0-0, while a thrilling, sacrificial draw by perpetual check could be a 4-4 draw. If you add the half-time scores too, then you can give a still better impression of the course of the play.

Today's game, from the latest round of the 4NCL which was played last week in Birmingham, would be something like a 3-4 victory for Black, with White leading 2-0 at half-time. Yet despite the turnaround in the second half, there was nothing that could really be described as an own goal. It was just that White seemed to make all the running, and show all the brilliant ideas, in the first half of the game, and Black fought back effectively at the end.

Black's 8...c4 is rarely a good idea in this type of position even if, as here, it gains a move by attacking the bishop on d3. Its main merit is to avoid the complications of 8...cxd4 9.Ne2, but by closing the Q-side, Black cuts off his own natural counterplay.

Black grabbed the white a-pawn – a common theme in this line of the French – but White's clever plan of 20.Nd21 (nearly prepared with 19.Be1) and 21.Nh3! forced open the Q-side. After 21...cxd3 22.cxd3 the bishop on a4 is lost and White's rooks rage into action.

White's subsequent play on the K-side looked a little fishy as he cut his queen off with Qh3 and f3, but his idea became clear with 32.g4!! and 33.Bxc4 when 33...dxc4 is met by 34.d5 exd5 35.Qxf5+.

But that was the end of White's fun. After 33...Qb6! and 34...Kd8! White saw that 35.Bxc4 would be met by 35...Qb1+ 36.Qf1 Qxf1+ 37.Kd1 g2+ 38.Kg1 Rh8 and Black wins. As the game went, White's 36.Qc1 could have been met by 36...Rh8 37.Bh2 Rxb2 with a simple win for Black. I suspect that Black's 36...Nxd4! was the move intended against 36.Qc1 (to avoid 36...Rh8 37.Bg5+), but it proved a very effective finish in this case too.

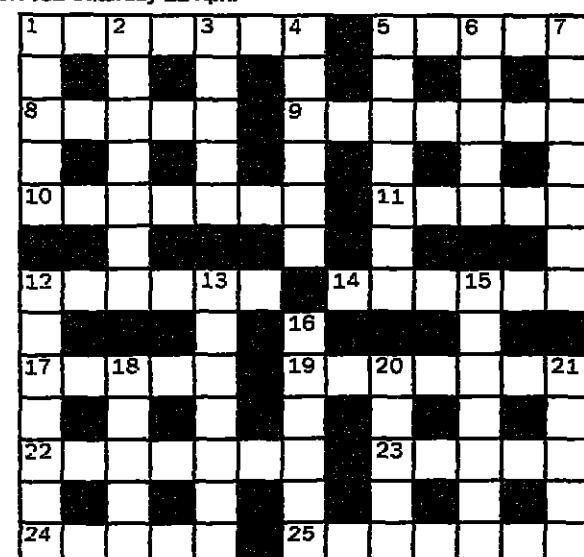
White: N McDonald

Black: S Clarke

1 e4 e6 22 Qxh5 Nc6
2 d4 d5 23 Ne5 Rg5
3 Nc3 Bb4 24 Qh3 h5
4 e5 c5 25 Nxa4 bxa4
5 a3 Bxc3+ 26 Rxa4 Rhg8
6 bxc3 Ne7 27 Rb5 a5
7 Qg4 Qc7 28 Rc5 Rg4
8 Bd3 c4 29 f3 Rg5
9 Be2 Nf5 30 Bd2 Rg6
10 Nf3 Bd7 31 Bf4 h4
11 a4 Qa5 32 g4 hrg3
12 Bd2 Bxa4 33 Bxc4 Qb6
13 0-0 Nch 34 Bb5 Kd8
14 Rb1 h5 35 Qf1 g2
15 Ra2 0-0-0 36 Qc1 Nxd4
16 Bf1 h6 37 cxd4 Nxd4
17 h4 Rde8 38 Rxd4 Qxc5
18 h5 g6 39 Qf2 Rh8
19 Be1 Nce7 40 Bh2 Rxb2
20 Nd2 Qc7 White resigns
21 Nb3 gth5

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3562 Saturday 11 April



ACROSS

- 1 Give back (7)
- 5 Frequent (5)
- 8 Plant-louse (5)
- 9 Complete collapse (7)
- 10 Tropical disease (7)
- 11 Stand a drink etc (5)
- 12 Be sparing (6)
- 14 University qualification (6)
- 17 Caper (5)
- 19 Antiquated (7)
- 20 Adage (7)
- 23 Banish (5)
- 24 Knightly weapon (5)
- 25 Treat tyrannically (7)

DOWN

- 2 Kingdom (5)
- 3 Learned person (7)
- 4 Cause to be beloved (6)
- 6 Regular customer (7)
- 7 Pawnbroker (5)
- 8 Playhouse (7)
- 12 Surgical instrument (7)
- 13 Heavy knife (7)
- 15 Appreciate fully (7)
- 16 Tropical plant with woody stem (6)
- 18 Spiny projection (5)
- 20 Inexpensive (5)
- 21 Board game (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Canna, 4 Letter (Canaletto), 9 Jackpot, 10 Evict, 11 Leek, 12 Inhabit, 13 Map, 14 Idea, 16 Need, 18 Set, 20 Distant, 21 Glee, 23 Boath, 25 Admiral, 26 Extant, 27 Tweed.
DOWN: 1 Cajole, 2 Niche, 3 Alps, 5 Elephant, 6 Thimble, 7 Rotate, 8 Strip, 13 Marathon, 15 Distort, 17 Edible, 18 Steal, 19 Felled, 22 Large, 23 Omit.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

North
♦Q 10 7 4 2
♥A 9 8 4
♦9 3
♠A 6

West
♦8 3
♥J 6
♦K Q J 6
♠K J 9 5 3

East
♦J
♥Q 10 5 2
♦A 10 7 4
♠10 8 7 2

South
♦AK 9 6 5
♥K 7 3
♦8 5 2
♠Q 4

There are a number of ways of insulting opponents. I remember this one (from my formative years) quite well. Fortunately I was dummy at the time and not the target for East's attack. The hand, however, is not without interest.

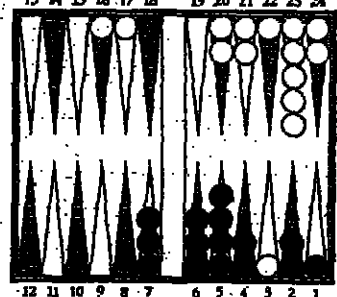
South opened One Spade and, as North, I raised to game to end the auction. West led ♠K against Four Spades and, when he continued with ♠Q, East overtook with his ace and switched to a low club. Declarer brooded, naïvely tried the queen, and won West's king with the ace.

This was East's moment (it was a chatty game): "You link you play mit Kinder?" he demanded in a mid-European accent. Certainly the play was all over now; there was no escape from a losing club and, eventually, a heart as well.

Comments apart, what went wrong? When you think about it, it is inconceivable that East should go out of his way to overtake ♠K in order to lead away from ♠K. Therefore declarer can place West with this card. The only hope, then, is that West holds at most two hearts.

On that assumption, South carefully retains ♠Q and wins the trick with dummy's ace. He draws trumps, ruffs his last diamond, and cashes ♥A and ♥K before exiting with ♠Q. On lead, with no hearts left, West has to concede a ruff and discard, and South's losing heart goes away.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



This deceptive position occurred in my chouette the other evening. Black is on roll and is considering a double. What is the correct cube action for both sides? As with any position, the first thing to do is the pip count. Black's count is 72. And lo and behold, White's pip count is also 72. Based on the race alone Black should not double – but what about the other elements of the position?

There are three things that Black should consider. First he is in a good attacking position. Many small numbers, eg 32, 42, make his 4-point. With numbers like 52 he will hit loose on the 4-point and make his 1-point. If White fails to enter first time he will be lost.

The second point is that in the race Black needs only three short cross-overs (a cross-over is the movement of a man from one quarter of the board to the next) before he can start to bear off his men. White, on the other hand, needs five cross-overs before he can start his bear-off.

Finally, even when White does start to bear off his men his home board position is far from ideal. When you start a bear-off you want most of your men on the higher points. Here White already has five men on his 2-point, which will lead to an inefficient bear-off.

All three of these points favour Black and it should be apparent that he has a strong double. What is surprising is that White's position is in fact so bad that he must drop the double – he needs too many things to go right for him, and he will win from this position only 20 per cent of the time. Beware of evaluating such positions on the race alone – you must consider the whole board. In the game from which this position was taken, Black doubled, and White took and promptly got gammoned. All races are not equal.

style and
t mix

The art of stand-up comedy

Kathryn Jackson's three-dimensional collages are a triumph of wit and observation, writes Claire Gervat

In the two-dimensional world of art, Kathryn Jackson's work literally stands out. Her witty three-dimensional paper collages are not only affordable, they are charmingly personal. Each is unique, since it's the personality and interests of the recipient that determine what goes in to it. One of her most recent commissions, for instance, was for Paul Bradley, who plays Nigel in *East-Enders*, who had a scene of the video shop and Queen Vic with a market stall in front

commissions, because people put such a lot of time and effort into making their partners happy," she says. "It's great to see that side of life." She has no doubts that romance is alive and well, and cites as fairly typical the man who gave his wife a scene of the Empire State Building with a small plane trailing a banner with "Marry me?" on it as a wedding present, to remind her of where he'd proposed.

The price for such sympathetically individual art is more than reasonable. The smallest pieces cost from £230 to commission, with the more usual-size scenes in 16-in-square frames costing £600. Ready-made works in her small gallery in the Oxo Tower building in London cost less than this; the smallest are priced at around £125.

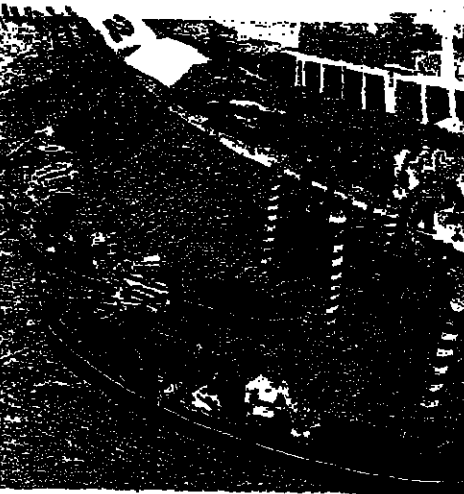
Kathryn began making her 3-D collages at Maidstone College, where she was doing a graphic design degree. After graduation, she worked for six months for a small graphic design studio in Camberwell, south London, but soon found herself making so many collages for friends and anyone else who asked her that she decided to become self-employed. Some time later she was looking for a new studio space, and saw a sign advertising rooms for craftspeople and designers in the Oxo building. She became one of the first tenants, and is plainly delighted with her glass-fronted gallery with its spectacular view of the river.

The gallery has a small sample of her previous work, though she admits it's not as large as she would like, as she hasn't had time to replenish the stock. Among the pieces on display is one of the Taj Mahal, but when I ask her whether she's been to India she roars with laughter. "I've been to the library," she confesses. "They think I'm the best-travelled person in south-

west London, because I get out all these books on Hong Kong and India." That said, she has been abroad a great deal. The models she made for the opening credits of the BBC2 programme *The Travel Show* were created with the help of her collection of sketch books from past journeys in Italy, the south of France and elsewhere. The BBC is not the only commercial organisation to appreciate her talent for creating genuinely witty work. Past clients include Harvey Nichols, for whom she abandoned her attachment to strange types of paper in order to make a window display entirely out of food.

A breadstick horse has a limited shelf life and is not an obvious present, but the same cannot be said for Kathryn's paper collages. Witty, personal and an easily kept secret until the last minute, they are, like diamonds, for ever... but a great deal less expensive.

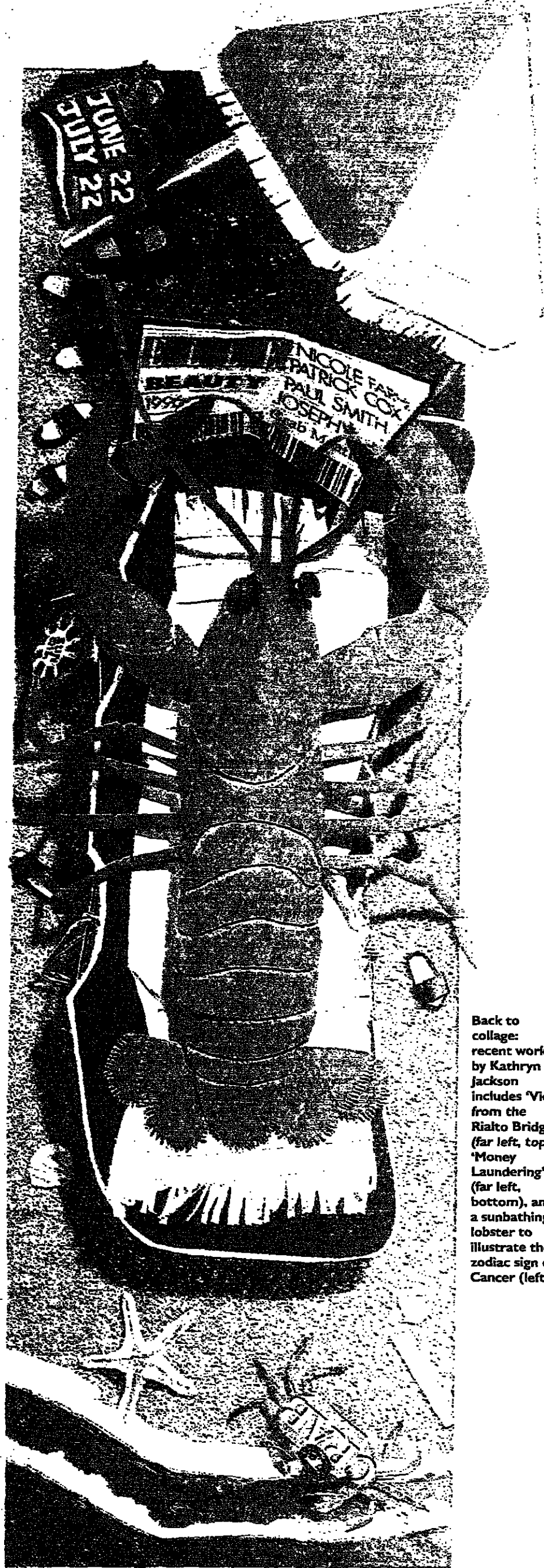
Kathryn Jackson is at The Cube Gallery, 1.11 Oxo Tower Wharf, Barge House Street, London SE1 9PH (tel and fax: 0171-401 8118; mobile: 0973 419272).



as his leaving present from the show. Another client, an opera-lover whose wife doesn't share his passion, ordered a scene of the two of them in a box with him watching the stage and her reading *Hello!*

In order to produce one of her imaginative pieces, Kathryn first needs to know what it is for - a wedding present, a birthday, a retirement? - along with as much information as possible about the planned recipient and his or her interests. She also asks the giver to collect items that could be incorporated into the final piece: eg airline tickets, perhaps, for a frequent flyer. Indeed, she often uses unusual bits of paper such as old banknotes, bonds and passports in her work; a scene of San Gimignano in Tuscany, for instance, was made entirely out of local wine labels. Once that's done, it takes Kathryn about two or three weeks to produce the final piece, since she may be heavily booked up with commercial work.

What impresses her in particular are the efforts her customers make to ferret around for things and keep the whole idea of the gift a secret. "I enjoy doing private



Back to collage: recent work by Kathryn Jackson includes 'View from the Rialto Bridge' (far left, top), 'Money Laundering' (far left, bottom), and a sunbathing lobster to illustrate the zodiac sign of Cancer (left)

A gem of a course

Soldering, hallmarking... Sally Staples learns the art of jewellery making

One of the attractive aspects of jewellery making is the range of materials on offer. Some of the most stunning designs are worked in copper and brass, so there is no need to spend a fortune stocking up on silver, gold and precious stones to learn the basic techniques.

In a bustling jewellery workshop at a West London Adult Education College, students were working on everything from copper wire to sea and freshwater pearls. In one corner Valerie Woodcock had carefully crocheted red and gold wire into a traditional neck choker and then made a small cap to match. The cap, she explained, could be lined with material and turned into an elegant evening bag.

Across the bench from Valerie, Kaori Whalley displayed a necklace made from more than 100 natural pearls hanging from a silver chain. Her friend Mini Antoine was patiently working at a pyrex bangle on which she intended to rivet 96 tiny seed pearls.

One student was polishing a tiny gold heart while another was labouring over a simple Cabochon ring. This jewellery-making course runs for three terms in 10-week blocks and accepts both experienced students and complete beginners who are able to work at their own pace.

Tutor Jenny Gilchrist starts the beginners off with a lesson in how to make a band ring. They will learn how to anneal metal to make it soft enough to shape and are taught how metal should be cut. Half-round pliers are used to bend the strip of metal until the two ends overlap and the band can then be adjusted to fit and cut accordingly. Finally the band is soldered.

Valerie, a housewife, is now working on Cabochon ring which has involved setting a stone into a tiny gold circle which will then be soldered on to the silver band. "I love jewellery and I'm really here to make some pieces for myself. Some of the students give them as presents and some produce work that is good enough to sell," she says.

One of these is Christine Holmes, who works part-time for an antique dealer threading ancient beads and re-stringing pearls and spends the rest of her time designing ornamental pieces in precious metals, such as the silver bowls inlaid with pearls which she sells for between £200 and £300. On the course, she has just completed some one-off rings in silver and moonstone and freshwater black pearls.

Anissa Hajjaj is passionate about her jewellery, and although it is now only a hobby, she has ambitions to set up a shop and sell her work one day. She is working on a silver bangle around which she wants to twist a gold thread and attach coloured stones.

"I like the work so much," she says. "It's very challenging and quite technical. There is a chance to be artistic but there is much more to making jewellery than having a nice idea. I can't draw so I design things in my head and then see if they will work, but I often change my ideas as I go along."

As the course progresses, students will learn about working with sheet metal as well as covering piercing, drilling, embossing, mark-making with hammers and heat-treated surface textures. They will be taught how to work with wire and make basic chains and links.

Next come traditional soldering techniques: students will learn how to size and fit ring shanks and cover techniques relevant to settings for Cabochon stones and very basic gemology. There is also a lesson on sterling silver, some precious metal theory and the practicalities of hallmarking, as well as wire work, demonstrating knitting and crocheting techniques.

Tutor Jenny Gilchrist provides students with a comprehensive list of what jewellers need in their tool kit and they are encouraged to start building up a basic collection of clamps, saw-frames, a selection of pliers, reverse-action tweezers, a tapered handle, needle files, a torch and a bench peg. Most of these items are less than £10 each.

"Jewellery offers something for everyone," says Jenny. "And I think a lot of the people who come on the course use it as a form of therapy. You don't have to be a perfectionist to make a good piece, but the perfectionists do tend to go for small and intricate designs."

Students can continue to work through three levels of jewellery making over a series of 10-week blocks until they have achieved enough credits for a London Open College Federation Certificate. But for those who just want to have fun, a 10-week course involving three hours a week costs £50. Jenny's course is run by Kensington and Chelsea College (0171-573 3600). For information on similar courses, contact local education authorities and colleges of further and adult education.

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A Ford by any other name...

Ford hopes Lincoln will give its new car more kudos, says Gavin Green

Ford has unveiled the replacement for its ugly, slow-selling Scorpio big car. And it won't be called a Ford.

Instead, Ford will reintroduce the Lincoln name, which in America stands for big, conservative cars typically aimed at old people) and in Europe, so Ford research suggests, stands for not very much at all. Lincolns haven't been sold in Europe since the Thirties and are probably best known here for typically supplying various US presidents with transport - including John F Kennedy on that fateful day in Dallas.

The new car - the LS series - goes on sale early next year, after its debut at this week's New York Auto Show. It comes in two model guises, the LS6, powered by a 3.0-litre V6 engine, and the LS8, powered by the same 3.9-litre V8 engine used in Jaguar's XJS and XK8 models.

There's rather a lot of Jaguar pedigree in the Lincoln. The LS shares the same floorpan, suspension, V6 and V8 engines and transmissions as Jaguar's upcoming mid-sized executive car, codenamed X200, which is to be unveiled at this October's Birmingham Motor Show and which will hit British streets early in 1999.

However, the two cars share no exterior or cabin components. "Nothing that you can see or touch will be common," says Ford's president, Jac Nasser. "The common component is all invisible. They also feel completely different to drive." Although the suspension and engine are shared, they are tuned differently. Both cars use aluminium suspension and use a new Ford five-speed electronic automatic gearbox.

The Lincoln LS6 in effect replaces the V6 version of the old Scorpio and should sell in the UK for about £25,000. The LS8 will cost about £28,000 and will be the cheapest luxury V8 car sold in Europe. Equipment levels will be impressively high, and the car will be sold on its roominess, comfort and value for money. "The goal is to compete with BMW and Mercedes, and to do that, the LS has to be as good as those cars. We're confident that it is," says Nasser.

Scorpio production ceases in July. Last year, only 20,000 were made - less than a tenth of the production volume obtained by class rivaling models made by BMW and Mercedes.

Ford reckons the mass-market name (Ford) is a serious turn-off to those sporting Mercedes-type money, and is gambling that the Lincoln moniker will have more kudos. It will certainly have more exclusivity. Ford expects to sell only about 20,000 LSs a year in Europe. America will be by far the biggest market.

The hideous styling of the Scorpio was another major sales turn-off. The Lincoln is a far more conservative-looking thing. Apart from its bulk - it is more than 18ft long - and its BMW-copy nose, it is discreetly anonymous. Britain and Germany, so Ford expects, are likely to be the two biggest European markets.



Anonymous: the conservative new Lincoln



Conceived as a latter-day Lotus Elan, the new MX-5 excels for wind-in-the-hair thrills

The Lotus eater

Remember your first MGB? Top-down, two-seater motoring, wind in the hair, a world temporarily free of cares; a peculiarly British world, because it's here that most two-seater sports cars, of which the MGB was the most numerous, were created.

Italy has produced a few, too. And Japan has produced a few more. Yes, just when we Brits had forgotten how to do it, up popped the Mazda MX-5.

It was much the same idea, brought up to date and with a little bit of Lotus Elan mixed in for good measure, but this time it was guaranteed to work and keep on working, which was where the old BL interpretations weren't so hot.

Not surprisingly, the Mazda has been a huge sales success. And now, nearly nine years on - more than twice the production life of a normal Japanese car - there's an MX-5 Mark Two.

It's as well, really. Once other car-makers, including the current custodians of the MG name, realised that people hadn't fallen out of love with sports cars after all, we ended up with quite a sel-

lection to choose from. Against these newer rivals, the MX-5 has been screaming dated. Good grief, it may even be heading for that automotive rest-home known as the world of classic cars. Certainly there's the culture to support it, with MX-5 clubs all over the world. In Japan, where it's called the Eunos Roadster, the car is almost a cult object.

At first glance, this new version looks much like the old one. The pop-up headlights have gone, the former side-light and indicator unit having grown to include the headlights as well, and there's no longer a crease running around the car's midriff. Instead, we find a subtle squeezing of contour along the lower flanks to give a soft-edged, zig-zag reflection of light, and a squatter, more muscular stance.

But - how could they? - the designers have replaced the pull-out

chrome door handles, copied from an old Alfa Romeo Duotto, with boring modern ones. Apparently, the old handles broke fingernails.

The theme remains retrospective inside, with cowed, circular air-vents resembling the nozzle of a hair-dryer, but it feels more solid and looks more expensive. This applies to the whole car: the structure is stiffer, and the shudders over bumps are fewer. The hood's rear window is now of heatable glass instead of scratchable plastic, and the boot is now just small instead of laughable.

This new-found solidity does wonders for the driving experience, because it has allowed Mazda to modify the suspension. The changes are subtle, but the effects are dramatic.

Even its greatest fans have to concede that the old MX-5 could turn twitchy in a fast bend or on a wet road.

It was fun if you felt heroic, but hard work if you weren't in the mood.

All that has gone. The new MX-5 feels much more stable, more tolerant of skill shortcomings. But this has been done without damage to the interactivity, the sportiness, the fun is enhanced, but the fear has gone.

The new car is faster, too. There are still two twin-cam, 16-valve engines to choose from, but the 1.6's power has risen from a feeble 88bhp to 110, while the 1.8 delivers 140bhp instead of 130. Both are good-looking engines - these things matter in a sports car, you know - with a pair of cast aluminium cam covers just like an old Lotus Elan's. And they feel eager to play, especially the 1.8. A sweet, swift gear change, activated by possibly the shortest, sharpest-shifting gear lever in mass-produced existence, helps the engine to sing.

This new MX-5 is the best sensible-money, everyday-practical sports car you can buy. Britain may have had the original idea, but Japan has made it work properly. So what's new?

Mazda MX-5 1.8iS

Price: £8,775
Engines: 1.839cc, 4 cylinders, 16 valves, 140bhp at 6,500rpm. Five-speed gearbox, rear-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 177mph, 0-60 in 7.5sec, 28-33mpg.

Rivals

Alfa Romeo Spider: £23,305. Terrific wedge-shaped styling, fine pedigree, but expensive. Structure flexes over bumps, too.
BMW Z3 1.9: £21,480. US-built, looks faster than it is; a shade over-styled. Less fun than Mazda.
Fiat Barchetta: £15,825. Cute looks, full of retro details, but hatchback underpinnings take away sporty edge. Price close to MX-5 1.6; left-hand drive only.
MGF: £17,995. Mid-engined layout gives huge roadholding, but it feels less intimate than Mazda to drive. Cabin is plasticky.

Still worth taking for a spin

Second-hand MX-5s have kept their value, reports James Ruppert

Since the launch of the Mazda MX-5 in 1990, more than 430,000 have been sold world-wide.

The arrival of a brand-new model does not necessarily devalue the old one. UK sales have run at record levels for two years, and such is the demand for the MX-5 that second-hand imports have flooded in from Japan.

A few years back, if you fancied a spot of sporting open-air motoring

there wasn't much choice. Mazda's MX-5, which combined the looks of a Sixties Lotus with the reliability of their dull 323, inspired a host of imitators.

Provided the car has been looked after, and has a comprehensive main agent service history, there is little cause for concern. The only confusion occurs with special editions with questionable cosmetic additions.

Checking a used MX-5 is easy. Full service history, no bodywork damage and an intact hood are all good signs. However, a complication has been the increasing numbers of Eunos Roadsters - the Japanese name for the MX-5. Bought cheaply in Japan for £2,000 to

£5,000, they seem like good value, fitted with CD player, air-conditioning and sometimes even an automatic gearbox.

However, the rust protection is of a lower standard than European cars, some parts are going to be harder to get, and the service history may be patchy. Certainly they require some work to meet MOT regulations.

One thing the MX-5 does not do is depreciate; since the early Nineties it has been hard to buy any model below £8,000. Pinewood Mazda had two 48,000-mile 1.6 models. The 1990 car cost £10,495, the 1991 £11,000 more. Brand new, they cost only £14,000. No wonder Japanese imports are popular.

As for classified ads, the dealers don't always advertise the model as a Eunos Roadster, which legally they should. Longbridge in Croydon, with cars starting at £7,995, settles on Mazda Roadster. Autotek Imports had a 1993 30,000-mile 1.6 with air-conditioning, at £8,950, whereas a UK specification example would cost at least £12,000.

To find a cheaper non-Eunos, try a private classified ad. I discovered that £7,500 would buy me a slightly scruffy 1990 model with 60,000 miles.

For used MX-5s, you can pay a lot of money and face a bewildering choice. But one thing is certain: the original MX-5 is a thoroughly modern classic.

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2089 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
2090 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
2091 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
2092 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
2093 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
2094 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
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2097 AD	1.300	H42 454	830	MX5 PCK	2.500	8181 RN	2.200
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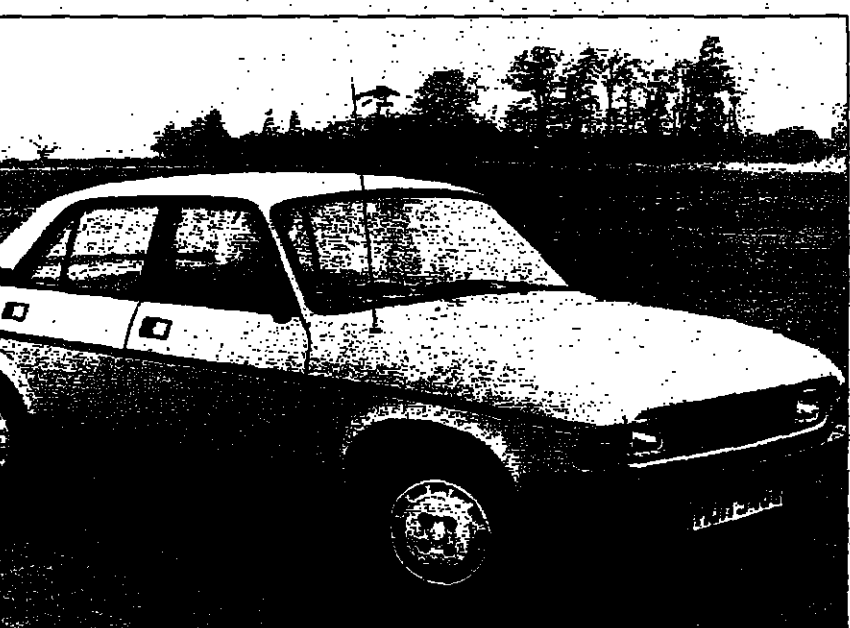


MY WORST CAR: WILL HOY'S AUSTIN ALLEGRO

I've got a terrible confession to make. I used to own an Austin Allegro. Now that was far and away the worst car I ever ran, but the funny thing was, it never let me down. I think I would have remembered if it had. I suppose I have always had a perverse liking for oddballs. So long as a car is a good drive you can make the most of it.

World Formula One champion James Hunt, don't forget, had an Austin A35 van as his main transport. He managed to have a great deal of fun in a van that had trouble getting anywhere near 60mph. So a car doesn't have to be obviously exciting to be a decent drive, although my Austin Allegro didn't manage that either.

My main car for well over a decade was a series of Morgans. Now there was



a motor with the potential to be a worst car. It was a convertible open to the elements, had a wooden frame and was hand built, yet I managed to drive the cars in all weathers. No journey was anything less than fun. With the Allegro every journey was a complete pain. It was an embarrassment, basically.

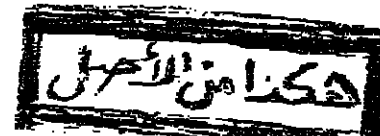
I'd give that car zero out of 10 for style, and in the mid Seventies it just didn't suit my image as a budding racing driver. I'd describe the colour as puke orange, and, as I said before, it never broke down; it just did everything so badly.

Acceleration: I don't think there was any. Brakes: I don't remember too much evidence of their existence, either. The steering was vague to say the least, and what made it worse was that as it was an early model it was fitted with an oblong

steering-wheel. However, a car that did give me problems was an Alfa Romeo 75. But what a car. It made a great noise, and handled like a dream, though you never knew what was going to fall off next. That, I think, is a major part of the attraction. To me, that sort of exciting car is just like a friend, a wayward one. As a result I was very fond of that Alfa, which kept me constantly entertained.

As for that boringly reliable Allegro, all it did was make me very depressed.

Racing driver Will Hoy has competed at Le Mans five times, was second in the All Japan Touring Car Championship in 1988 and won the British Touring Car Championship in 1991. This season he will be driving a Ford Mondeo. He was talking to James Ruppert.



**HOW I HOAXED
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John Walsh
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THE INDEPENDENT

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

The search for a new beginning in Northern Ireland has been haunted by history. By David McKittrick in Belfast

ALL OF the participants in the Northern Ireland peace process went to the Stormont talks with the hope of finding a new Ireland, a new agreement for the new millennium. But behind every table stood a ghost: along with a commitment to peace they were haunted by the legacy of centuries of religious strife.

Take the Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. He left the talks for a time on Wednesday to bury his 87-year-old mother, Julia. Born in 1911, she often told the family about growing up in west Cork during the south's troubled passage towards independence. Bertie's father was a member of the 3rd Cork brigade of the IRA. In later life Mrs Ahern would tell tales of how the Black and Tans shot all the turkeys on the family farm and how, during the civil war, Free State forces would come to their home and "turn it upside down" because it was regarded as a republican household.

Bertie Ahern has always been a constitutional nationalist, vehemently denying that the IRA of today are the legitimate heirs of the republican forces of the 1920s. Nonetheless folk-memories and family recollections have played an important part in moulding even his generation of southern politicians.

This week he found himself negotiating with northerners whose lives have been more deeply and more recently touched by violence. The purpose of the enterprise was to find a new political dispensation to supersede the imperfect arrangements of the 1920s.

There has never been such a wide-ranging negotiation involving so many points of the political compass, and rarely has such a sense of a historic new beginning been generated.

Mr Ahern found himself coming to grips politically with, for example, Jeffrey Donaldson, one of the Ulster Unionist party's chief negotiators. Mr Donaldson still remembers learning in 1970, when he was seven, that a cousin had been killed by the IRA. An RUC constable, he was one of the first policemen killed in the Troubles.

Also in the talks was Gerry Adams, who is used to accusations that he has been a supporter of violence. But his family too has suffered: a nephew was savagely killed by extreme Protestants in the mid-1970s, while his niece's husband died, also at the hands of loyalists, in January of this year. Others in the Sinn Féin delegation, perhaps even a majority of them, have been to jail.

Across the table from them were delegates associated with loyalist paramilitary groups. These also contained people who have lost loved ones, and who have taken life: four of the loyalists there yesterday have killed at least six people, and spent time behind bars as a consequence.

In one sense it was time well spent, for most of them emerged

from the Maze prison changed people, disenchanted with violence and hungry for politics. One of them killed two men and threatened my life, actions which, in the 1970s, were the stuff of paramilitary politics: today he has a deep and genuine longing to have done with war.

It is the sight of conversions such as these, in which hard men learn the hard way about the facts of civilised political life, that give most hope for the future.

How did we get to this point? The purely political parties, excluding Sinn Féin and the loyalists, had been talking together on and off since 1991, when Peter Brooke as Northern Ireland Secretary first brought them together. Those early efforts seemed to come to nothing, although it can now be seen that valuable groundwork was laid for later advances.

It was John Hume, leader of one of the few parties which has never been overtly or covertly involved with violence, who years ago set out the conceptual framework for the talks. He maintained that they should deal with three key sets of relationships: those between Unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland; those between north and south; and the east-west relationship between Britain and the island of Ireland. Its strength was that it was an agenda designed to cope with the facts of history and geography.

John Major and Sir Patrick Mayhew brought the parties together again in mid-1996, but they became bogged down in procedural trench warfare and made little headway.

Then came Sinn Féin. After the July 1997 renewal of the IRA ceasefire, Tony Blair moved swiftly to bring the republicans into the talks, and to set a deadline for their completion. Rev Ian Paisley, who walked out as the republicans walked in, will now oppose the agreement, as he has opposed all past deals.

But crucially David Trimble stayed, though at no point have his party members negotiated with or even spoken to Sinn Féin members. The talks moved slowly, and not as the Government would have wished, but despite difficult moments they did not fall apart.

Until this week they tended to take the form of speechifying rather than productive negotiation, with parties almost endlessly rehearsing their cherished beliefs rather than suggesting compromises. It is a fair bet that without the Government's insistence on a deadline, they would have continued to rehearse them for many more months.

A particularly bad period came at the turn of the year, with some important republican figures breaking away from the IRA and four of David Trimble's 10 Westminster MPs pressing him to quit the negotiations.

Deeper trouble followed when the assassination of loyalist leader Billy Wright by republicans brought a wave of

loyalist violence which included the shooting of Gerry Adams's relative. At that point, attention focussed on the Maze jail, where Mo Mowlam went to calm loyalist prisoners, rather than in the talks: worryingly, politics seemed for a moment to have lost their primacy.

But the talks resumed on schedule, though the progress of negotiations was halted by disputes which led the temporary expulsions first of one of the loyalist parties and then of Sinn Féin. The two governments also produced a paper which was sharply rejected by both Sinn Féin and the IRA: a later draft was however more favourably received by republicans and nationalists, and the talks stayed on track. A particular outcry was caused when a loyalist attack on a bar in the previously peaceful Co Armagh town of Poyntzpass killed two men, Philip Allen and Damien Trainor. A Catholic and a Protestant, they were lifelong friends whose relationship transcended political dispute. The poignancy of their deaths generated momentary despair, yet it did not deflect the course of the talks.

By this time, the outline of an eventual settlement had become clear. A new devolved assembly would be set up in Belfast, while a north-south council would

link the two parts of Ireland. A new concept, that of a British-Irish council, would connect devolved institutions in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

The new deal would include measures to protect civil and political rights, promote equality, and go on to consider the issues of policing, prisoners, the justice system and arms de-commissioning. In total, this amounted to a new political geography of these islands which would address Hume's three-cornered concept.

But while the outline was clear enough, its vital details – as the events of this week showed – remained stubbornly unresolved. Arguments continued over arrangements for the assembly and its relationship with the north-south council. Unionists advocated a modest assembly and an even more modest north-south body: the assembly, in their view, should have no legislative powers and no cabinet to run it, while the north-south institution should be merely consultative.

Over the months, Sinn Féin delegates played their cards close to their chest, favouring a strong north-south body but refusing to admit publicly that an assembly should be part of any deal. This seemed illogical in that any cross-border institution would have to be anchored in a Belfast assembly, but it made sense political-

ly in that it meant the republicans gave no hostages to fortune and made no concessions.

The SDLP and Irish government pursued agreement much more actively. They advocated a strong assembly with legislative as well as administrative powers, to be run by a new cabinet-style administration including both Unionists and nationalists. They argued for a powerful north-south body with

On the Unionist side, however, a number of the negotiators readily contemplated cooperation with constitutional nationalists such as the SDLP, but balked at the idea of ever working with Sinn Féin. A few months ago, Unionist negotiator Ken Maginnis, for example, described Sinn Féin as "unreconstructed terrorists," declaring: "I could never give cognisance to them, not as long as I live."

The useful thing was that all

Delegates complained that its stark Sixties design offered no intimate hidey-holes for private politicking. In the canteen, most politicians tended not to mix, while the bar was found unappealing. Comparing it to an RUC interrogation centre, Gerry Adams called it "Castlereagh with coffee".

But not all the business was done at Stormont, with both Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern receiving a flow of visitors to London and Dublin. Adams went to Downing St several times, but a much more frequent visitor was David Trimble. The Prime Minister knew that no deal could be arrived at without the approval of the Unionist leader, and set out to win his trust. He appears to have succeeded in this – which was no mean feat, since Mr Trimble's precise thought processes all along remained a mystery even to some of his closest associates in his own party.

One of the few moments of levity came earlier this month when Mo Mowlam announced that so much progress had been made that the deadline had been advanced. This turned out to be an April fool's joke; in fact the story of this month has been one of hold-ups and apparent setbacks. The talks chairman, George Mitchell, was to produce his working paper on Friday of

last week, but it was not until the early hours of Tuesday that it emerged from his office, the delay signifying much behind-the-scenes disagreement.

Once it arrived, however, the paper served its purpose of confirming the shape of yesterday's agreement while leaving key details open to last-minute renegotiation. By this stage, Sinn Féin had become the dog that didn't bark: republicans seemed to accept a clearly partitionist document with something approaching approval, with the noisy objections coming instead from the Trimble Unionists.

Yet even as the Unionists complained, it seemed they were coming to terms with the new political contours laid out in the Mitchell document. The demand was for changes to the document, not the scrapping of it, and it served as the basis of the final burst of negotiation.

In the final days Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern arrived, bringing with them the political muscle to dislodge the parties from their treasured positions. They have been days and nights of hard pounding, but they have ended in success. The spectre of all that unresolved history lay heavily on everyone, but in the end it proved not strong enough to overcome the spirit of peace and the desire to put an end to war.

Symbol of hope: The peace statue in Craigavon Bridge, Londonderry

Photograph: Ian Torrance

There have never been negotiations involving so many points of the political compass, and rarely has such a sense of historic new beginning been generated

wide powers and enough independence to thwart any moves by a Unionist-dominated assembly to neuter it.

Behind the arguments lay two very different philosophies. A strong consensus had developed within Irish nationalism that any settlement which excluded Sinn Féin would, in the words of a former Irish government adviser, not be worth a penny candle.

the parties became familiar with the details of each other's positions. The problem was that the talks remained stuck on the point of each party's preferred options, with no one sure how far others were prepared to move.

The talks building itself has been no help to negotiation. A modified civil service office block within the sprawling Stormont estate in east Belfast, it is characterless, cheerless and boxy.

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Hill rebuilding defences of fortress Kingsholm

RICHARD HILL has spent the last two and a half years of his sporting life falling ever deeper in love with the rumbustious rugby city of Gloucester, which is remarkably forgiving of a man whose playing visits to Kingsholm invariably reduced him to the status of a human doormat on which eight gnarled and thoroughly nasty Cherry and White forwards would make a point of wiping their size 12s. Even now, the sheer ferocity of the place makes him wince. "Two local sides, Longlevens and Spartans, used our training ground for a cup semi-final the other day," he says. "I couldn't bring myself to watch it. Far too squeamish."

If he were being honest, he would agree that the parlous condition of Gloucester RFC circa October 1995 made him feel queasier still. Having spent his entire grown-up career as a wildly successful scrum-half with Bath and England, winning John Player Cups, Pilkington Cups, Courage league titles, Triple Crowns and Grand Slams by the baker's dozen, he suddenly found himself clutching the smellier end of the West country stick. Needless to say, the *aranea* was distinctly agricultural.

And in truth, Hill himself was partly to blame for Gloucester's bout of mid-decade depression. "I think you can trace their demise to the 1990 cup final, when Bath stuck the best part of 50 points on them," he acknowledges. "It was a fair old stuffing, one way and another, and I remember them being in bits after the game."

"The whole city had made the trip up, the sun was shining and they were having a whale of a time. Then the game started and it was curtains within minutes. The club took a rapid nosedive after that and spent the next few seasons shuffling around at the bottom."

Thirty tough months on, "Glasgow" have left the bottom far behind, as it were; indeed, they would be challenging for a coveted place in the

For a former hero of Bath, Richard Hill has found himself surprisingly at home at rivals Gloucester. Chris Hewett met him

Heineken European Cup if Heineken Cup places were still a going concern. Their away form may alternate between the abject and the appalling – the Cherry and Whites tend to travel by team hearse rather than team bus – but Hill's resourceful, one-step-at-a-time brand of coaching has given them back their Kingsholm pride. As Newcastle, the Premiership title favourites, may well discover to their cost this afternoon, the famous old ground is once again an absolute

Gloucester's one and only home defeat of the season was inflicted by Harlequins, of all people. "They were doing all this high fives business at the final whistle, which kind of stuck in the throat," recalls Hill – and recent gates have cruised past the 10,000 mark. They have a trophy, albeit the low-key Cheltenham and Gloucester Cup, tucked safely away in the sideboard and, rather more importantly, a set of decent threequarters to go with the traditional hairy-arsed pack. With the latest instalment of money from the owner Tom Walkinshaw, the boss of Formula One team TWR Arrows, available this summer, God is indeed in his heaven.

As usual, though, Hill preaches caution. "We can still undo the good work and finish the season on a downer," he warns. "The job is half-done. I'd say, no more than that. I'm contracted here for another four seasons and if I'm going to see this through, as I very much

'There's a culture of "Sod the second team". When these clubs start struggling no one will want to know'

want to do. I think I'll need all the time that is currently available to me.

"I'm not a great one for sudden success, the quick fix; even as a player I went about things very methodically, stage by stage and piece by piece, making sure things were right before moving on to the next task."

"I look around me and I see clubs trying to get everything done yesterday. If it's not working perfectly, they scrap it; there's a definite culture of 'Sod the second team' or 'Sod the colts'. But word gets around and when these clubs start struggling at first team level, no one will want to know them."

"Agreed, I had to move a few players on when I arrived at the club and some of them were very familiar faces who had been tremendous servants for many years. But I've gone about this from the bottom up, tried to develop a strong work ethic and our sense of togetherness is such that with the possible exception of Charlie Mulraine, a third-string scrum-half who went to Moseley, we haven't lost a single player we would rather have kept."

A glance at the Kingsholm team-sheet reflects both new and old Gloucester. The first-choice pack were all born and bred in the city with the exception of England's new tight-head prop, Phil Vickery, who was imported from Cornwall. Outside, though, there are four England A backs from all points of the compass, supplemented by a Frenchman, an Australian and a South Sea Islander.

"We brought in the necessary personnel, simple as that," says Hill. "The old stories about Gloucester forwards still hold true: I could go out to Mason or Coney Hill, or over to Cheltenham, or across to the Forest of Dean and pull in fit, hard, quality forwards with the capacity to make a fist of it at professional level."

"But backs? They're a different matter around these parts. The forwards spent years working their fingers to the bone, only to find the three throwing hard-earned possession away. It must have been soul-destroying for them. I decided very early that given the money, I would go further afield for our backs."

"The presence of Richie Tombs, Terry Fanolua, Philippe Saint-Andre and the rest has, in turn, brought more out of the pack. Take Pete Glanville, for instance, or Simon Devereux. They were honest grafters, loose forwards who could play a destructive game with the best of them. Now, though, they play some football as well. They create. I'd like to think this Gloucester side has more strings to its bow now, particularly at home."

"If we have a priority, it must be an improvement in our away form. We still hold sides in awe when we travel; we seem to think 'God, it's them, we haven't got a cat's hope in hell of winning this one'. It's a vicious circle. We've failed at some grounds so often that they've become bogey grounds and because they're now bogey grounds, we feel incapable of winning there."

"That's why I'll be interested to see how Newcastle react to what is bound to be a special occasion. Kingsholm will be new to quite a few of their players and while the lack of psychological baggage could work to their advantage, they could also be knocked sideways by the passion and atmosphere generated by the crowd. As I know from bitter experience, it's a very intimidating place to visit."



Coach in touch: Richard Hill awaits Newcastle's visit

Photograph: Mike Egerton/Emphas

Saracens savour Guscott gaffe

By Chris Hewett

Bath 19
Saracens 29

IT HAS been an interesting few days for Jeremy Guscott, the super-swish Maserati of European rugby. Embarrassingly tapped by an Irish Robin Reilly at Twickenham last weekend, Guscott coughed and spluttered his way through yesterday's compelling Allied Dunbar Premiership showdown with Saracens and finally spun off the Recreation Ground track to hand the Londoners what could yet be their most precious win of a memorable season.

Agreed, injuries to Mike Catt and Richard Butland forced Bath into taking a long shot on Guscott at outside-half and given the presence of Francois Pienaar and Michael Lynagh in his immediate field of vision, a lesser talent might have been written off well inside the opening quarter. All the same, Guscott's uncharacteristic *face* two minutes past the hour mark effectively drew a line under the European champions' chances of a unique double.

The sides were superglued together at 13-13 when Kyran Bracken, a superb wet-weather scrum-half, gave Andy Nicol the slip and kicked dangerously ahead. Guscott did not need to find overdrive to reach the ball ahead of his pursuers, but his attempted dead-ball kick was out of the Basil Fawlty cock-up manual and with Adeyado Adeyayo impeded by an awkwardly placed post, Pienaar slid into view to claim the touchdown.

From then on, it was all Lynagh. The former Wallaby captain had played a majestic role in a first half of sublime quality, mixing up his kicking game cleverly enough to keep the Bath back row at bay. In the final 11 minutes, he landed three penalties out of the cloying West Country mud and come the end, the visitors were good value for their first Recreation Ground victory in more than a century.

As Nigel Redman and his colleagues in the Bath pack tore into the fray from the kick-off, the Londoners looked as though they might have to wait another century to break their duck. Adeyayo stooped low to secure a try-scoring pick-up on 21 minutes and had the Bath decision-makers not invented new ways of wasting seven-point opportunities, the die would have been cast long before the interval.

But as they have proved of late, Saracens are now the most successfully committed defensive unit in the English game. Pienaar led the way, clattering into the tackle areas as though his prized friendship with Nelson Mandela depended on it. Sure enough, the rest followed, especially Steve Ravenscroft, the unsung journeyman of the cup finalists' back division.

Richard Wallace's individual try on the stroke of half-time gave the visitors their first inkling that they might win the day; the Irishman capitalised on Lynagh's inspiration down the left to sidestep Ieuan Evans, Phil de Glanville and Nicol before stepping out of Richard Bryan's weak covering hit.

Small: The Adeyados; Conversion: Guscott; Penalties: Guscott; 2. Saracens; 3. Bath; 4. Pienaar; 5. Guscott; 6. Lynagh; 7. Pienaar; 8. Guscott; 9. Pienaar; 10. Guscott; 11. Pienaar; 12. Guscott; 13. Pienaar; 14. Guscott; 15. Pienaar; 16. Guscott; 17. Pienaar; 18. Guscott; 19. Pienaar; 20. Guscott; 21. Pienaar; 22. Guscott; 23. Pienaar; 24. Guscott; 25. Pienaar; 26. Guscott; 27. Pienaar; 28. Guscott; 29. Pienaar; 30. Guscott; 31. Pienaar; 32. Guscott; 33. Pienaar; 34. Guscott; 35. Pienaar; 36. Guscott; 37. Pienaar; 38. Guscott; 39. Pienaar; 40. Guscott; 41. Pienaar; 42. Guscott; 43. Pienaar; 44. Guscott; 45. Pienaar; 46. Guscott; 47. Pienaar; 48. Guscott; 49. Pienaar; 50. Guscott; 51. Pienaar; 52. Guscott; 53. Pienaar; 54. Guscott; 55. Pienaar; 56. Guscott; 57. Pienaar; 58. Guscott; 59. Pienaar; 60. Guscott; 61. Pienaar; 62. Guscott; 63. Pienaar; 64. Guscott; 65. Pienaar; 66. Guscott; 67. Pienaar; 68. Guscott; 69. Pienaar; 70. Guscott; 71. Pienaar; 72. Guscott; 73. Pienaar; 74. 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Sarage
savours
Guscon
gaffe

Good old days of Bovril on tap and leaky loos



THE
GAFFER
TAPES

APPARENTLY HRH Phil wants to see a World Cup match. What, I wonder, brought on this sudden interest in football? It's not as if he's been a regular down at the Old Cornfield. Not that we're taking it personally, it's not as if he goes to Old Trafford, the usual haunt of glory-hunters, or Elm Park, Windsor's local league ground, either.

It's not even as if Greece are in the World Cup. He may justify pinching a ticket from one of the Tartan Army on the basis that he is the Duke of Edinburgh but how often has he been to Tynecastle or Easter Road, or seen the Jocks at Hampden? But then, nice as Easter Road is - especially at this most appropriate time of year - it's hardly Paris in June.

At least William and Harry have been to see the odd League game, you may recall William having an afternoon at the Old Cornfield. He certainly does, he still has the mental and

physical scars to remind him. Apparently he has never forgotten it, whenever he threatens to turn up wearing Doc Martens and Kangol rather than a suit and tie the Palace threaten to make him go again.

Phil the Greek's conversion is, I suppose, the final proof that football has moved away from its working-class constituency. Next thing we know there will be Earls and Barons buying up clubs, and I don't mean Robbie and Jim.

Well, we at the Old Cornfield do not intend to forget football's illustrious past. We are working on a new lottery application for a luxury Heritage Stand. It combines the conveniences of the modern game with the traditions of the old. Each seat will have Bovril on tap (guaranteed BSE-free) and a complimentary packet of Woodbines, a wooden rattle and a flat cap on a string - so you can get it back after throwing it in the air after a goal.

To really capture that sepia-toned spirit we'll provide small boys to be passed over the audience to the front (they'll actually be small tailors' dummies, you can't be sure what sort of deviants we may attract otherwise); a Tannoy which doesn't work; special toilets where it flows all over your feet; and an old bloke sitting behind who keeps saying 'course, Raich Carter would've slaughtered this lot'.

We're expecting a big middle-class uptake on this which we hope will see spin-offs at the club superstore. We're trying to negotiate a sponsorship deal with someone like Ikea or Laura Ashley which would involve every fan, sorry, customer, getting Goal Points for every purchase at the ground which could be redeemed at their shop.

To kick off the promotion we were going to give every fan an Easter egg today but the police put the kibosh on it, they

said they might be used as missiles. Instead we're handing out Easter bonnets though I'm not sure the lads at the Graveyard End, resolutely working-class, are going to be too impressed.

Of course, a lot of issues are settled at Easter but it's not like the old days. I can remember playing four times in four days, all away games. Blackburn then Plymouth, Darlington then Gillingham. And we won them all, we cleaned up at the bookies though it barely covered the speeding fines.

Meanwhile, I've had a problem with the local paper, the *Sludgehorpe Advertiser*. I've had a running battle with the editor ever since he caught me giving his daughter some free coaching one night and now he's got his own hank with a front page headline of 'Gaffer held after lewd low shame'.

Talk about top-spinning a story. I'd been out for a walk in the park, looking at all the schoolgirls, when I was caught

short. Anyway, the public toilets had all this yellow and black tape round them but I couldn't wait so I climbed over to get some relief, so to speak.

Then a cop tells me I'm trespassing on a crime scene. Apparently Stavros George, a pop star, had been arrested a few minutes earlier for a dodgy misdemeanour and I've gone and destroyed the evidence. The plus side is two free tickets for Stavros' next concert, the downside is an appearance in court the following morning.

Meanwhile, Ivor Niggle is out today, he's got the runs after eating all his Easter eggs in one session, and as for Shaun Frone, well, his excuse is too daft for words but I've promised to listen without prejudice. If Melinda Messenger's become a Buddhist anything is possible, even Shaun pulling a muscle on an extra training run.

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

SIDELINES

Close neighbours are worlds apart



BRENTFORD and Fulham are separated by a short stretch of river and 15 places in the Second Division table. Unfortunately for Micky Adams, who has been at the helm of both clubs this season, today's derby rivals are oceans apart in terms of financial muscle.

Adams, having steered Fulham out of the Third Division on a shoestring, barely dipped into Mohamed Al Fayed's millions before being sunk by the arrival of Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins (whose father George and brother Graham played for Brentford). Since joining the low-budget Bees after a brief stopover at Swansea, he has been back up the Thames for Danny Cullip, Paul Watson and Glenn Cockerill, his assistant and 38-year-old midfield powerhouse.

The man who brought Adams to Fulham, Jimmy Hill, was a forward in their days as perennial strugglers in the old First Division and returned as chairman in 1987 just in time to keep them at Craven Cottage. Yet it was Brentford, where the bearded one played for three years from 1949, who launched his uniquely wide-ranging career.

Among the budding TV pundit's team-mates there was the future England manager, Ron Greenwood, who also won a championship medal with Chelsea before they were reunited at Fulham. Others who have moved between Griffin Park and the Cottage include Roger Cross, Barry Lloyd, Fred Callaghan and Terry Bullivant. Like Hill and Greenwood, all went into management.

Pele, Giggs and Billy the goat

Guy Hodgson on the opening of Old Trafford's £4m state of the art museum

IN THE Sixties and Seventies, Manchester United supporters would sing "Charlton is better than Pele". It was the sort of twaddle that should have shamed even the most red-eyed Salford Ender, but who ever accused football crowds of being objective or rational.

Well, Sir Bobby was busy elsewhere yesterday and instead Old Trafford's new museum in the north stand was officially opened by Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pele, to you and me, and somehow nobody felt short-changed.

The scorer of 1,282 goals in 1,365 professional appearances (97 in 111 for Brazil) and now the Minister of Sport for his country took one look at the £4m building and, like much of the rest of the sporting population, gasped. Never mind the football, just feel the corporate might.

"I think Manchester United have become the most important club in the world," Pele said as he toured the three floors of a museum that pushes Old Trafford another few leagues ahead of the rest of the Premiership, "because of their administration and their stock market listing." Brazil, he said, would be aping the commercial machine put in motion by United.

You could understand why. United's museum was only eight years old but had become overwhelmed by demand. Some 192,000 visitors a year had the seams of the structure groaning and the club confidently expect more people will be drawn to the new attraction.

Around 30 million people annually are expected to shop at the new Dimplington Shopping complex nearby and surely some will be siphoned off to



Main exhibit: The great Pele opens the new Manchester United museum at Old Trafford yesterday

Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

pay the £7.50 entrance fee that will include a tour round the ground as well as a chance to wallow in nostalgia.

Those statistics are impressive, but so is the museum. The Man-U-Net, an encyclopedia of the club that can be accessed from 18 terminals, includes details of 5,000 matches, 1,000 players and 5,000 goals. Every player has a bi-

ography and a record of appearances - Ryan Giggs alone has 36 video clips dedicated to him and 105 pictures - and, if the blur is to be believed, it would take more than a week to explore it fully.

Elsewhere, Peter Schmeichel has donated his entire medal collection to the exhibits while the most unusual display is the stuffed head of the one-

time club mascot, Billy the goat. It was kept as a pet in his backyard by the former captain Charlie Roberts and met its sad demise after United's FA Cup final victory over Bristol City in 1909 when it succumbed to too much beer in the post-match celebration.

Sir Bobby Charlton has given a substantial collection of his own trophies, including his 1966

World Cup winner's medal, which is comfortably beaten by Pele's contribution, the temporary loan of the medals he won in the World Cup finals of 1958, 1962 and 1970.

Pele never played at Old Trafford although he had been here before, typically in this commercial age, to film an advertisement.

After endorsing Brazil's bid

for the 2,006 World Cup and hoping that, if the tournament comes to Europe it ends up in England - you would never guess he was a politician now would you? - he was asked who was the United player he admired most.

"Michael Owen," Pele replied. Ouch! On the day United were meeting Liverpool too.

Ten things that Tottenham's Algerian Moussa Saib might be missing today



- 1 The capital Algiers, located in a Mediterranean bay and in the shadow of the mountains.
- 2 The Martyrs' Monument in Algiers, a 92-metre high concrete memorial which dominates the skyline.
- 3 Algiers' Medina area of narrow alleys and old buildings. A confusing place where a French influence can be detected. Like White Hart Lane on a good day, then.
- 4 Kebabs. Although there's no shortage of places to buy a doner in N17 or on Green Lanes.
- 5 The beach at Zeralda.
- 6 The ski resort at Chrea, 50 miles south of the capital and 1,510 metres above sea level.
- 7 The off-the-beaten-track coastal town of Tizi, where nothing disturbs the sleepy atmosphere and few outsiders choose to visit.
- 8 Constantine, the town described by Alexandre Dumas as 'an eagle's nest perched on the cranny of a crag'.
- 9 Many gorgeous gorges.
- 10 Roman ruins in almost every town.

NAME OF THE GAME

No 30: GAINSBOROUGH TRINITY

Gainsborough played 564 Football League games - against opponents including Manchester United and Arsenal - before they failed to win re-election in 1912. The Lincolnshire club, who today play in the UniBond League, were formed out of the Trinity Recreation Society, which was founded in 1872. Their inspiration was Canon Hodgkinson, a well-known sportsman in the town who was associated with the local Trinity Church. The footballers were known as Trinity Recreationists and Gainsborough Trinity Recreationists before the name Gainsborough Trinity was adopted in 1888. The club's first recorded match produced a 2-0 victory against the Trent Club, who turned up with only 13 players for what should have been a 15-a-side game.

THIS WEEK

On 9 April 1988, Liverpool and Nottingham Forest met in the semi-final of the FA Cup at Hillsborough. Kenny Dalglish saw his side win, courtesy of two goals from John Aldridge. Nigel Clough scored for Forest, but it was not enough to keep his father's team in the cup.

Liverpool were immediately installed as hot favourites to complete the double, and, as they were 11 points clear at the top of the First Division and due to meet lowly Wimbledon at Wembley, no-one could really see how they would fail. The day after the semi-final win over Forest, John Barnes was voted the Player of the Year by his fellow professionals. The strength of the Liverpool side was emphasised by the fact that Barnes' closest challengers for the award were his teammates Steve McMahon and Peter Beardsley. (The PFA's Young Player award went to Newcastle's Paul Gascoigne, incidentally.)

Liverpool went on to take the title comfortably in May, but were unable to do the double. They lost the Cup to the Crazy Gang.

HISTORY LESSON

If Arsenal are seeking encouragement that they can win the Premiership title despite not leading the table at this stage of the campaign they should look back to the 1992-93 season.

For the last four seasons the League leaders at Easter - Manchester United in 1994, 1996 and 1997, Blackburn in 1995 - have gone on to claim the title. Five years ago, however, United won the championship despite going into the Easter programme in second place behind Aston Villa.

At the end of March, with seven games remaining, United were in fact in third place behind both Villa and Norwich. A turning point came on 5 April when United won 3-1 at Norwich to go second behind Villa. United went on to beat Sheffield Wednesday on Easter Saturday and took over at the top from Villa, who could only draw with Coventry.

United ended the season with a run of seven successive victories, finishing with wins over Coventry, Chelsea, Crystal Palace, Blackburn and Wimbledon. Norwich and Villa took only seven and 10 points respectively from their last seven games.

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Referee banned after farce in Prague

Czech Republic

IT may not come as much consolation to the likes of Joe Kinnear and Les Ferdinand, who have both been vocal on the subject recently, but it is by no means only English referees who are coming under increasing scrutiny.

A referee, Karel Vidlak, and his two assistants have all been suspended after several controversial decisions in last weekend's Czech League derby between Sparta Prague and Slavia Prague, which ended as a 1-1 draw.

A Czech Football Association commission gave Vidlak a four-game ban and one assistant, Jiri Vodiccka, a two-game suspension.

The heaviest penalty went to the other assistant, Petr Petrik, who was suspended for nine matches, including two games from a previous suspended punishment.

"Poor decisions clearly influenced the outcome of the game," the FA said. Vidlak

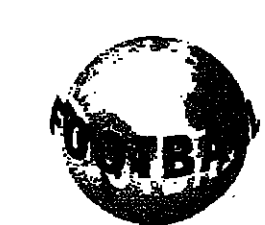
awarded Sparta a penalty - which was missed - for a foul which television replays showed was well outside the area. Sparta's late equaliser came after Petrik had failed to give an apparently clear offside decision.

After the match, which left the league leaders Sparta with a 10-point advantage over Slavia with only seven fixtures left, furious Slavia staff called for action against the officials and suggested that matches between top teams should be in the control of international referees - an idea the Czech FA rejected.

Brazil

THE famous Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro will host its first international in nearly five years after this month.

The huge old stadium, which once had the largest capacity in the world when it was in better repair, will host a friendly between Brazil and Argentina on 29 April. The na-



FOOTBALL
AROUND
THE WORLD
BY RUPERT
METCALF

tional team last played there in September 1993, when two goals from Romario earned a 2-0 win over Uruguay and a place at USA 94.

The Rio clubs that have used the Maracana since then are now playing elsewhere, in protest at inflated rents. The stadium faces an uncertain future, owing to lack of use and its decrepit state.

Since 1993 and their last competitive home game, Brazil have played all their friendlies in smaller cities, which have provided financial guarantees and regular full houses.

The venues have included the Amazonian jungle city of Manaus and small provincial towns like São Jose do Rio Preto and Teresina.

Mexico

FANS in Mexico are bemoaning the state of their national team before the World Cup finals. In the last game of a South American tour on Wednesday, Mexico were thrashed 5-1 by a Chilean club side, Universidad de Catolica. They were also beaten 3-1 by the Argentinian team, Boca Juniors.

For a country in fourth place in the Fifa world rankings, this is not good enough. Scorn is being poured on the new national coach, Manuel Lapuente, who replaced Bora Milutinovic - sacked after

Mexico had won the final Concacaf qualifying round.

"We fired Bora and put in Lapuente for this? This is unacceptable," Valente Aguirre, the president of the First Division club, Leon, said.

The fans, who call their side the "Tri" after the three colours in the Mexican flag, are now calling the team the "Tritanic".

Lapuente remains defiant, however. "Everything is still according to plan," he insisted.

France

A BORDEAUX fan caught trying to smuggle flares into the Stade de France for last weekend's League Cup final is the first Frenchman to be banned from the World Cup finals.

A Paris court has fined 26-year-old Stéphane Lecam 800 francs and banned him from all football stadiums for six months. To make matters worse for him, his side lost the final on penalties to Paris St-Germain.

60 days until the start of the World Cup finals... THE president of Bulgaria craves success for his country's footballers at the World Cup finals to distract this citizens from the harsh realities of life in the Balkan nation. "Sport is a very important social factor," President Petar Stoyanov said on Thursday. "Bulgarians are undergoing difficult social and economic reforms and are paying a high social price for that. They need a boost and success in France will give us confidence." In post-communist Bulgaria, living standards are low and unemployment high. Football plays a part in politics. Stoyanov used the support of players like Hristo Stoichkov to help him win the presidency in 1995 by a landslide.



Lens' 3-0 victory over Stade Rennais on Tuesday leaves them three games from their first French championship. Today they play Lyon in the semi-final of the French Cup. Not bad for a town smaller than Macclesfield or Stevenage

A tiny town beats the moneybags

John Lichfield reports from Lens, who are in sight of a French cup and league double

IT IS a wet, weekday evening in Lens, a grey day in a small, grey town. But, in the Stade Bollaert, home of the Racing Club de Lens, all is raucous, passionate joy. Mexican waves: organised, rhythmic chanting: a Brazilian-style drum section: a fans' band with a passable trumpet soloist ("Amazing Grace: the Saints"). The Lens supporters are a wet night's entertainment in themselves.

And the football is pretty good too. The fervour for *Les Sang et Or* (the blood and gold) was once fuelled by a bitter pride in a devastated region and a sincere passion for football which is rare in France. In those days, the Lens fans would sing of their under-achieving heroes: "On a perdu mais on est heureux" (We've lost but we're happy).

Abundantly, the red and yellow hordes have something to sing about. Their 3-0 victory over Stade Rennais, amid the cacophony on Tuesday night, put them three games from their first championship. If they defeat Lyon in the French Cup semi-final today they will be on course for an extraordinary league and cup double.

Extraordinary because Lens, in the Pas de Calais, 50 miles from the Channel Tunnel, is smaller than Macclesfield or Stevenage and has a population of 35,000. The Stade Bollaert holds 42,000, 20 per cent more

people than the town. (The stadium has been entirely rebuilt for the World Cup as a concrete and glass replica of Highbury. Arsenal fans who procure tickets for the England v Colombia match on 26 June will feel, bizarrely, at home.)

This is not, in truth, the story of a French Wimbledon or a French Blackburn Rovers. The *Sang et Or* have been a major French club, on the cusp of honours, for years. They attract fans from across the stricken industrial belt of the Pas du Calais and Nord and from as far afield as Normandy and Picardy.

After Paris St-Germain and Marseilles, they are the third-

best supported team in France with an average gate of 26,800 this season. It would, never-

theless, be a considerable achievement for a club with a relatively modest budget (£12m a year), from a small, depressed town (20 per cent unemployment), to win one of the major championships in European football.

It so happens that their closest rivals, Metz, are also a small town team. Two years ago the *championnat* was won by a wholly bucolic place, Auxerre, in the green depths of northern Burgundy.

How is it that the fashionable moneybags - Paris St-Germain, Marseilles, Monaco - are so often squeezed out by their country cousins?

French rates of taxation



The fans of *Les Sang et Or* - the blood and gold - have a passion for football that is rare in France. The average gate is 26,800, second only to Paris St-Germain and Marseilles

make even the highest gross salaries uncompetitive with Italy, Spain or England so almost all first-choice French internationals play abroad these days. The standard of the French First Division remains high but a well-run provincial club with a squad of good, mostly home-produced players and a clever manager can win the title.

Racing Club de Lens fit the bill on all three counts. The principal difference this year has been the new coach, Daniel Leclercq, 49, a former player brought back from obscure retirement as a football-cum-tennis coach in a nearby village to be the youth trainer and then first-team manager.

Leclercq is an unlikely looking soccer supremo, a balding, stooping, chain-smoker with unruly wisps of blond hair, a disorderly beard and mournful blue eyes. After Tuesday's important victory he said his players were "desolés" (desolate or sad) that they had not played better. Leclercq looked desolated; the players did not.

Home and away Racing Club play an aggressive 5-2-3 formation, or perhaps 4-1-2-3. The advanced sweeper is the excellent Frédéric Déhu, a target for Manchester United, Blackburn Rovers and a host of others. At any moment, the midfield two can become five, six or seven.

The attacking guile is produced by three bought-in stars, Vladimir Smicer, from the Czech Republic, Anto Drobniak, from Montenegro and the club's record signing at £1.7m, Tony Vairelles, from Nancy. Almost all the rest of the squad is home-grown.

Lens could cause a few surprises in the Champions' League next year - if they hold on to their players. There is the rub. Among the 35,000 spectators on Tuesday were Alex Ferguson, Roy Hodgson and the representatives of nine other British, Italian and Spanish clubs. Apart from Déhu and Smicer, transfer targets include a tall, fast, powerful, skilful

midfielder from Cameroon, Marc-Vivien Foé.

I had a brief post-match conversation with the club's clever, abrasive president, Gervais Martel, 44, a local free-newspaper millionaire. The very presence of a foreign journalist seemed to put him in a bad mood. He hates the Parisian and foreign press treating Lens as a bunch of surprising provincial hicks and he hates the menacing presence of all those foreign scouts in the stands. Martel believes that Racing Club are not giant-killers to be patronised, but sleeping giants about to awaken.

"We're not a small club, we're a great club with a great

record. If you English don't know that, you know nothing," Martel raged. "All you English care about is transfers. I'm not interested in transfers. I'm interested only in the next game. If they [presumably Ferguson, Hodgson et al] want to know about transfers, let them phone me. But I'm not interested."

Martel has hired the firm that built the Manchester United superstore to work the same miracle for Lens: to turn that passionate base of supporters into a merchandising gold mine (or blood-and-gold mine). Ownership of the club has been opened up to a consortium of local businessmen, who believe that a successful club can be a

symbol for the renewal of the economy of northern France based on distribution services and the proximity of five other EU countries.

There is talk of almost doubling the club budget to £20m if Lens make the Champions' League next year but this dream could fade if the team is pillaged in the off-season as Auxerre were in 1996.

It may be that success has come to Lens a couple of years too soon, while the club is still developing the financial muscle to compete at the highest level. But there is no point in telling the fans that. They are winning and they are still happy; not at all desolate.



Lens' guiding lights: The manager Daniel Leclercq (above, standing) and club president Gervais Martel (on his right). After the club season is over there is the World Cup to savour, including England against Colombia in Lens on 26 June



Baby boom time for Thompson

The patter of tiny feet has proved a calming influence on a Bolton bad boy with potential. Glenn Moore met him

WHEN Bruce Rioch addressed the media in the first press conference of his brief spell as Arsenal manager he extolled the virtues of family life. Wedded players go out less and look after themselves better he averred. We thought of Paul Merson and a few other hitherto wild men, and wondered if Rioch was living in the real world.

For some, however, his advice held true. Ray Parlour attributes his improved form to a change in attitude following marriage and parenthood and, at Rioch's previous club, Bolton Wanderers, Alan Thompson feels the same.

Rioch was always on at Thompson, an enthusiastic socialiser, to find himself a nice girl. It became something of a club joke until a teammate, David Lee who is now at Wigan, introduced Thompson to his sister. Thompson is now approaching the second anniversary of his wedding to Joanne and enjoying the company of a five-month-old daughter. Although he has still been sent off once since her arrival, at the home of today's opponents, Blackburn, in December, his once-grim disciplinary record is gradually improving as his dedication off the pitch.

"I'm getting older and wiser," he said when we met after training in Cheshire this week. "It does make a difference once you're married."

It probably helps, too, that his daughter sleeps "from seven at night to six in the morning" and that Thompson appreciates the luxury of a footballer's life for a new father. "It's brilliant," he said. "I can spend time in the morning with her before training and a few hours afterwards."

The timing might also be perfect for his career. Thompson, now 24, has been regarded as promising since the days he was England Schoolboys captain and he is reaching the stage where potential needs to be turned into performance. A goal against Liverpool in the Coca-Cola Cup final a few years ago reminded people of his talent as did another, against the same opponents, which could be named Goal of the Month on tonight's Match of the Day. In between, however, many believe he has under-achieved. His international career has stalled after being sent off on his second Under-21 appearance and the days when he was being considered as a late contender for Euro 96 seem long ago.

"I've recommended him to Glenn Hoddle and I'm sure his time will come," said Colin Todd, the Bolton manager, who has moved Thompson from the wing into midfield. "He is beginning to blossom now. He was a bit immature and still is to a degree but he is learning all the time. He is a gifted player and one of those I would always have in my side. He has energy and endeavour, a will and desire to stay in the Premiership with Bolton Wanderers."



Older and wiser: Alan Thompson, now feeling the settling effects of parenthood which could be a boon for Bolton and his England prospects

Photograph: Peter Jay

"He should be our top scorer [he has seven goals to Nathan Blake's 12]. He gets in position but he wants to bust the ball when there are times when you have to stroke it in. He does have great attacking ideas, he wants to get forward, but he always gets back as well."

In some ways it is a miracle Thompson is playing at all. In September 1990, when he was a 16-year-old apprentice with Newcastle United, he broke his neck in a car crash on the A1 while travelling back from a reserve match at Leeds.

"I was," he said, "in a bad way. I had two operations and was out for 22 months. I wore a neck brace for nine months - I had about six of them so I could wash them and so on. I'd just left school and it was a bit worrying."

"My family were a great help. A couple of surgeons said that my career was over, but I always thought I would come through. Now I only think about it when journalists ask me."

Of the four in the car, Thompson, though the most grievously injured, is the only one still playing professional football. He came back to play for Newcastle alongside schoolfriend Steve Watson but, after just 16 League games, Kevin Keegan let him go to Bolton for £250,000 in the summer of 1993. Though a wrench to leave - he remains a Newcastle fan and sat with the Toot Army at the FA Cup semi-final - the move gave him first-team football.

"It's been eventful. We've been to the Coca-Cola Cup final, won promotion twice and been relegated once. I'm now the second longest-serving player after Keith Brannagan and I'm only 24."

How much longer Thompson will

remain is a matter of conjecture. Having stayed at the club last time they were relegated, he has shown loyalty, but his career is at a stage when it can do without another spell out of the Premiership. "At the moment I just look to stay in the Premier, if that happens I'll be delighted to stay. If anything else happens we'll see at the time. I've still got two years on my contract. Ideally, I want to play in the Premier, every player does. We'll see what happens."

"We are in with more of a shout of staying up than a few weeks ago. Previously, we always looked like conceding goals, but we've gone to five at the back and looked a lot tighter while still creating chances."

"We've also been a settled side recently and we have to maintain that. We are a better team than two years ago and have more depth, but the Premiership generally is better. The gap is getting bigger, we walked Division One last year and it's a hard division to get out."

Thompson's words are echoed by Todd. "We have good players, but we've lacked continuity - some of it our own fault with suspensions caused by stupid sendings-off. It's frustrating, because I felt we would hold our own and be in a better position."

The manager, however, has another grievance. The media is awash with features on plucky Barnsley yet Bolton, in many ways a similar club, are ignored. "I get annoyed by the lack of media attention, or bad media, focused on the football club," Todd said.

"We have played our part in trying to win games by playing football. Earlier this season Barnsley were getting thrashed right, left and centre, we were getting draws, holding our own,

and were not getting the right attention. Even now we're still playing football, but I've been at this club in six years and we've never had the right kind of media. Last season we couldn't do anymore and we got nothing. We've had praise when we've lost games, but don't seem to get it when we've won. I know we're not Man United but we're still in the Premiership."

Will this lack of attention mean Thompson will have to move to get international recognition? Todd noted that he himself had been capped at Derby which was not seen as a "glamour" club, but they did win two championships. It is a matter of staying up and building. "If you're regularly in the top six you get noticed even if you're not fashionable," Todd said. The task is thus to emulate Blackburn, but first they must beat them today.

Major weekend fixtures and pools check

TODAY
3.0 unless stated

FA Cup 1st Round

- 1 Arsenal v Newcastle
- 2 Barnsley v Sheffield Wed
- 3 Bolton v Blackburn
- 4 Chelsea v Tottenham
- 5 Coventry v Aston Villa
- 6 Crystal Palace v Leicester
- 7 Everton v Leeds
- 8 Southampton v Wimbledon
- 9 West Ham v Derby

Nationwide League

First Division

- 10 Birmingham v Port Vale
- 11 Bradford v Nottingham F
- 12 Charlton v Reading
- 13 Huddersfield v Crewe
- 14 Ipswich v Tranmere
- 15 Middlesbrough v Bury
- 16 Oxford Utd v Swindon
- 17 Sheffield Utd v Norwich
- 18 Stockport v West Brom
- 19 Stoke v Portsmouth
- 20 Wolverhampton v Man City

Second Division

- 21 Brentford v Fulham
- 22 Burnley v Bristol City
- 23 Carlisle v Oldham
- 24 Chesterfield v Northampton
- 25 Gillingham v Luton
- 26 Plymouth v Blackpool
- 27 Preston v Southend
- 28 Walsall v Millwall
- 29 Walsley v Wrexham
- 30 York v Bournemouth

Third Division

- 31 Barnet v Leyton Orient
- 32 Cambridge Utd v Peterboro
- 33 Cardiff v Colchester
- 34 Chester v Doncaster
- 35 Hull v Hartlepool
- 36 Lincoln City v Exeter
- 37 Mansfield v Torquay
- 38 Notts County v Brighton
- 39 Rochdale v Scarborough
- 40 Rotherham v Swanssea
- 41 Scunthorpe v Macclesfield
- 42 Shrewsbury v Darlington

Bell's Scottish League

Premier Division

- 40 Dundee Utd v Aberdeen
- 41 Hibernian v Hearts
- 42 Motherwell v Kilmarnock
- 43 St Johnstone v Dunfermline

First Division

- 44 Ayr v Hamilton
- 45 Falkirk v Stirling
- 46 Greenock v St Mirren
- 47 Partick v Aldrie
- 48 Raith v Dundee

Second Division

- 49 Brechin v Stranraer
- 50 Clyde v East Fife
- 51 Clydebank v Forth
- 52 Inverness CT v Stenhousemuir
- 53 Queen of the Sth v Livingston

Third Division

- 54 Albion Rovers v Ross County
- 55 Alloa v Dumbarton
- 56 Arbroath v Berwick
- 57 Cowdenbeath v Montrose
- 58 Queen's Park v East Stirling

TOMORROW

Bell's Scottish League

Premier Division

- Rangers v Celtic (4.0)

A life of drudgery and broken dreams fails to deter Rochdale's faithful fans

WHETHER you are of a religious nature, or whether your religion is football, there is usually some serious business to attend to during Easter. The former will be celebrating one man's rise from the dead and his subsequent ascension into heaven; as for the latter, well, miracles are often called for, too.

In footballing terms, Easter is the time of the season when dreams come true or become nightmares. It is a time when fans are either in footballing heaven, or coming back down to earth with one almighty bump. In short, by the time Easter is over you have a pretty good idea whether you're up or whether you're down.

Except, that is, if you're a Rochdale fan. Because apart from 1969, when Rochdale suffered a severe case of vertigo in ascending to the old Third Division (where they stayed for five seasons), the club have never stepped off the lowest rung of the Football League ladder.

For those who need to ask the question: "Where's Rochdale?" - as Coventry's manager, Noel Cantwell, did somewhat dismissively in 1970 before his First Division side were beaten 3-1 in a League Cup tie - a glance at a map will tell you that it lies deep in a

footballing heartland that includes six Premiership clubs, not to mention another 20 (at least) from the various divisions of the Nationwide League.

In other words, the temptation to take your loyalties elsewhere is great, particularly when your team is the lowest placed of all the aforementioned (currently 20th in the Third Division) and playing like it, too.

But once a Rochdale fan, always a Rochdale fan, as Richard Wild will tell you. Wild has graduated from mascot and ball boy to club lottery and merchandising manager (he also ran the exceedingly good fanzine *Exceedingly Good Pies* with co-merchandising manager Francis Collins) and admits that being a Rochdale fan is "a difficult cross to bear".

Perhaps these long-suffering fans would do well to remember that - to paraphrase the philosopher Max Ehrmann - it is still a beautiful game despite all the drudgery and broken dreams. Because drudgery and broken dreams have been pretty much their lot since the club were first elected to the old Division Three (North) in 1921.

True, they will go down in history as the only Fourth Division side (to date) to have appeared in the final of a major



OLIVIA BLAIR
ON A
MIRACLE-FREE
FOOTBALL
OUTPOST

competition (they lost to Norwich in the 1962 League Cup final), but as the League Cup in those days had even less clout and was a two-legged affair, a Wembley visit was not even on the itinerary.

Even Stenhousemuir, the only Scottish club afflicted by the same stay-put mentality (they required a Scottish Football League restructure to get them out of the bottom division, and have been sitting tenants in the Second Division ever since) have won a trophy: they beat Dundee United in last season's Scottish League Challenge Cup.

As their fans discovered, the first cup is always the sweetest. But Rochdale fans have known no such highs, nor even real lows; this season Doncaster laid claims to the Third Division relegation place very early on. So, Rochdale will "still be around next season", as Wild puts it, and in more ways than one; their shrewd commercial activities mean they have none of the financial worries that threaten some of their contemporaries.

The fact is that Rochdale run a "very prudent ship", as their chairman describes it, which will keep the club afloat, despite a lowly League position. Mind you, it has to be prudent considering they have an estimated weekly wage bill of £13,000, the cheapest tickets (£8) in the League and an average home gate of 1,400 (down from the 2,700 average three seasons ago), of which 400 are season tickets holders. It does not take a rocket scientist to work out that gate receipts alone will not suffice.

Of course, on-the-field flair doesn't necessarily have to be sacrificed in favour of off-the-field affluence (as Spurs fans will argue). But when you're as precariously poised as Rochdale you have to cut your cloth accordingly. Hence the reason why highly rated 16-

year-old keeper Stephen Bywater was sold to West Ham earlier this season, even if the fee was far less than the £2m widely quoted. The reality is that Bywater will have to captain England while he's still a Hammer for Dale to reap a substantial reward, and as Wild says, "we all know the chances of that happening".

Bywater wasn't even a regular; his only appearance came in a 6-1 Auto Windscreens Shield thrashing at Carlisle. In fact, Dale's usual keeper, Neil Edwards, a £25,000 signing from Stockport, has been one of the few plus points of a particularly forgettable season.

Still, most of those who witnessed it will still be there when next season kicks off, following Dale's ups and downs, should they be so lucky. Just like the legendary figure who was famous for considering football to be more important than life and death. Asked whether there was truth in the rumour he'd taken his wife to watch Rochdale on his wedding anniversary, Bill Shankly allegedly replied: "It was actually her birthday - I'd never have wed during the football season - and it was nae Rochdale, it was Rochdale reserves."

Sons of the Rock and a hard place

THE lot of a Crystal Palace fan may not be a happy one at the moment, but spare a thought for the lowly Dumbarton supporter. While relegation looks ever more likely for Palace, that luxury does not even exist for the "Sons of the Rock" - demotion to the Highland League is defunct these days. Dumbarton are so bad that there is nowhere left for them to go.

The bottom of the Scottish Third Division is a sad and lonely place, and until last week opponents regarded a trip to Boghead Park as a guaranteed three points, no questions asked. Dumbarton hadn't won at home this season and to be perfectly honest, no one expected them to. Where Palace at least managed an "away" win over their tenants Wimbledon, the Sons hadn't even had the chance to beat their lodgers (they share Boghead with Clydebank, who ply their trade in the nose-bleed territory of the Second Division).

Then, last week, Dumbarton won. But a 1-0 victory over the mighty East Stirling does not a new dawn make, and no one is expecting a repeat too soon. Boghead is no theatre of dreams, more a waterlogged music hall of failed resurrections. While there is room for 5,503 die-hards (303 of whom can luxuriate in the opulence of the main stand), few realise the footballing delights await-

ing them, and consequently nobody turns up. The average attendance is currently about 300, but seems to fall almost weekly. To put things in some kind of perspective, it would take the Sons over 160 games to fill Old Trafford once.

Life at Boghead is not all doom and gloom, though. There are moments of glory amid the morass of disaster

off by appointing Attilio Lombardo as player-manager, but the Sons have got "Ti Postino". OK, so midfielder Hugh Ward is not strictly Italian, but he is a fine postman. Surely it is time Dumbarton followed suit and hired a foreign manager - Julio Iglesias or Björn from Abba would be fine.

It hasn't always been so tragic. Dumbarton's history is rich and varied. The first ever Scottish First Division Championship in 1891 was shared by Dumbarton and Rangers, and the Sons won the second outright. They made Graeme Sharp the great player he was and sold him to Everton for £125,000. They even tried to sign Johan Cruyff - but that fell through when he saw Boghead. Past glories, however, offer little solace when your club is in freefall towards extinction.

A breakaway Premier League will surely spell the end for the Sons - lower league clubs cannot hope to survive without the major guns of Scottish football. Would it be so bad if Dumbarton did slip beneath the icy waters and disappear from the leagues? Well, yes it would. Small clubs will be missed when only the superpowers are left - who will provide the hope of a cup shock, or a quiet chuckle when the results come in on Saturday evening? After all, who wouldn't miss East Fife 5, Forfar 4? Or even Dumbarton 0, Cowdenbeath 3...

Hope may exist, however, with the Sons' Italian connection. Crystal Palace can show

FAN'S EYE VIEW NO 249

DUMBARTON BY JONNIE BAKER

Fate and fixtures conspire for Cup dry run

By Phil Shaw

FATE and the fixture computer often conspire to match the FA Cup finalists on the League stage before their Wembley confrontation. What makes today's meeting of Arsenal and Newcastle unusual is that the dress rehearsal has much more riding on it than the big production.

Both clubs are desperate for the points. Arsenal, one defeat in 23 games, because they need to maintain the pressure on Manchester United in the race for the Premiership title; Newcastle, two wins in 18, to stave off a schedule on which Bury and Port Vale replace Barcelona and PSV. Occupying the runners-up

spot Newcastle have taken for the past two years. Arsenal are embarking on a programme of eight "cup finals" in 30 days. Their success or otherwise will dictate whether they step out on 16 May with the Double still on Arsène Wenger's agenda.

Gravelling as that itinerary is, especially with Martin Keown joining a distinguished list of absentees, Arsenal's run-in is not as physically taxing as United's last spring. Remember how Alex Ferguson, forced to play four vital games in nine days, sought an extension to the season? Wenger called his request "ridiculous" and suggested that managers liaise with the FA to avoid a repetition.

Fed up thought, it seemed, yet nothing has

As the season nears its flashpoint, Phil Shaw reports on the quest for points at both ends of the table, while Nick Harris (below) offers a match-by-match analysis

changed and now the boot is on the other foot. The champions have an almost leisurely four matches left, whereas the challengers move on to an Easter Monday battle at Blackburn, who gave United a tougher time than a 3-1 setback suggested in midweek and were the last team to beat Arsenal back in December.

Today's collision of Tony Adams and Alan Shearer, England captains past and present, promises to be both bone-juddering and decisive. Adams is emerging as a strong contender for the Footballer of the Year award, but in the meantime Ar-

senal won a double of a less momentous kind yesterday. An unbeaten record during March made Wenger an irresistible choice as Carling Manager of the Month. Highbury's first since George Graham exactly five years ago. The punt, which included Glenn Hoddle, also named the reserve goalkeeper, Austria's Alex Manninger, as Player of the Month for his part in Arsenal's mounting pile of clean sheets.

Newcastle's nadir came when Crystal Palace left with a rare victory at the height of the "Toongate" scandal. Palace were unable to build on that success and will surely be doomed unless they defeat Leicester. While the failure to win a Premiership home game scarcely encourages optimism, they did thump Martin O'Neill's side 3-0 at Selhurst Park in the FA Cup.

The clubs Palace accompanied out of the First Division. Barnsley and Bolton, have eminently winnable home games. After four dismissals which will cost them key personnel when they can least afford it, Danny Wilson's side need to temper passion with poise in another volatile atmosphere against Sheffield Wednesday.

Evening drop. Spurs must break the mould against Chelsea, having failed to win any of their last 11 encounters and lost 6-1 at home to them. Gianluca Vialli promises a full-strength line-up as he gears up for the Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final against Vicenza, but ending the sloppiness which was costly in Leeds on Wednesday could prove difficult.

Leeds' focused approach and counter-attacking style make them less than ideal opponents for Everton at Goodison Park. George Graham's team have been on song for Europe, winning five out of six either side of their Stansted scare. In Jimmy Hasselbaink, who has now scored six League goals (15) as John Harrison or Andy Cole, they also possess the Premiership's in-form striker.

Arsenal v Newcastle

Arsenal will be without four first-team regulars as Martin Keown, Lee Dixon and Ian Wright are all injured, and Dennis Bergkamp is suspended. Keown injured his eye in last Sunday's FA Cup semi-final against Wolves and is being kept out today as a precaution, while Dixon will not be back before next Saturday at the earliest. Steve Bould will come in for Keown but Dixon's natural replacement, Gilles Grimandi, is not certain to play due to a back problem. Nicolas Anelka and Christopher Wreh are likely to continue up front as Bergkamp completes a three-match ban.

Kenny Dalglish will not name his side until the last moment, but Robert Lee and Steve Watson both have hamstring trouble and are unlikely to be involved today although they are likely to come into contention for Monday's game against Barnsley. Northern Ireland winger Keith Gillespie has not trained for the last couple of days and is also a doubt. Dalglish must decide whether to start with John Barnes in midfield or rest him in preparation for Monday's game. Newcastle have not won in their last five Premiership matches.

Barnsley v Sheff Wed

Barnsley will be without the suspended trio Darren Barnard, Darren Sheridan and Chris Morgan. They begin one, three and five match bans respectively, which means Danny Wilson will have to make some defensive changes. Arjan de Zeeuw should return for only his second game since 15 February after being out with a groin injury, while Matty Appleby is likely to complete the three centre-back line-up. Wilson will have to choose between George Hristov and Jan-Aage Fjortoft up front to partner Ashley Ward.

Sheffield Wednesday's new Brazilian signing, Emerson Thome, may make his debut. The 26-year-old defender, who was signed for free last month, was an unused substitute for the last two games. The Owls have lost their last four away games, so Ron Atkinson may use three centre-backs - Thome, Des Walker and Goce Sedloski - in a tactically changed line-up. There could be changes in midfield as well, with the captain, Peter Atherton, beginning a two-match ban. Graham Hyde and Jim Magilton are in contention for returns.

Bolton v Blackburn

Bolton have serious defensive problems for today's game. Gudni Bergsson and Jimmy Phillips are suspended, while several others are struggling with injury. Chris Fairclough is certain to replace Bergsson, but manager Colin Todd has no recognised replacement for Phillips, with Robbie Elliott and Mike Whitlow both out for the rest of the season. Todd must also decide who to pair with top scorer Nathan Blake. Bob Taylor has started only once since returning on deadline day, while young Swiss striker Gaetano Giallanza has yet to make a Premiership start. One of them is likely to play today, with Blake's normal partner, Dean Holdsworth, having scored just once in 18 appearances.

Blackburn manager Roy Hodgson has no injury worries for the Lancashire derby apart from the long-term absentee Tim Flowers. Hodgson seems likely to stick with the team beaten 3-1 by Manchester United in midweek, with Swedish striker Martin Dahlin starting on the bench. Rovers have won twice in the last six Premiership matches, while their opponents have won twice since 1 December.

Chelsea v Tottenham

Gustavo Poyet is back in Chelsea's squad for today's London derby, six months after suffering a ruptured cruciate knee ligament. The Uruguayan midfielder is likely to be a substitute at best today, but could play a role in next Thursday's European Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final against Vicenza. Russian goalkeeper Dmitri Kharine (knee) withdrew from the Chelsea squad yesterday, so Ed De Goey will play. Roberto Di Matteo is likely to feature today, although he will be banned from the European game after collecting a yellow card in the first leg. Frank Sinclair is still out with a thigh injury.

Darren Anderton, Les Ferdinand and John Scales are back in Tottenham's squad, but may be on the substitutes' bench. Ferdinand scored two goals in two games for the reserves this week after being out since February with knee and back trouble. Anderton also played in the reserve games after recovery from a long-term groin injury. Scales has not had a first-team chance this year. The manager, Christian Gross, however, is almost certain to persevere with Jürgen Klinsmann and Chris Armstrong up front.

Coventry v Aston Villa

Coventry expect to be unchanged from the side that drew 1-1 at Leicester last week for today's follow-up Midlands derby. Darren Huckerby has been under treatment for a groin injury, but is expected to play. Steve Ogilzovic, 41, in September, will play his 499th League match in goal. Manager Gordon Strachan, still not contemplating in match in goal. Manager Gordon Strachan, still not contemplating in match in goal. Manager Gordon Strachan, still not contemplating in match in goal.

...And statistics

Wenger sings from Graham's Highbury hymn sheet

Arsène Wenger seems determined to maintain at least some of George Graham's Arsenal traditions. "One-Nil to the Arsenal" was a theme tune of Graham's Highbury reign and Wenger clearly likes the sound of it.

Arsenal's last five Premiership matches have ended in 1-0 victories and it is now nearly three months since Wenger's men conceded a League goal. The Gunners' defence has not been breached in 744 Premiership playing minutes since Dion Dublin's penalty for Coventry at Highbury Road on 17 January as Arsenal have set a Premiership record of eight games - seven victories and a draw - without a goal conceded.

The start of Arsenal's run coincided with Alex Manninger's debut in goal. However, not even his six consecutive Premiership clean sheets were enough to keep out David Seaman when the England goalkeeper returned to fitness.

Arsenal still have some way to go to beat the Football League record, set by Reading with 11 consecutive clean sheets at the end of the 1978-79 Fourth Division season. In total Steve Death kept a clean sheet for 1,103 minutes. In Scotland Chris Woods was between the posts as Rangers won 11 games without conceding a goal in the 1986-87 season.

Until Arsenal's current run, the record of seven consecutive Premiership matches without a goal conceded had been shared by Everton (1994-95), Tottenham (1995-96) and Manchester United (1996-97) running into 1997-98.

United ended last season with two clean sheets and broke five more at the start of the current campaign. John Harrison broke the sequence with his goal for West Ham at Old Trafford on 14 September.

Arsenal and United are well ahead in the table of clean sheets for this season, while Peter Schmeichel has the best Premiership record both this season and overall. The United goalkeeper has kept a clean sheet in nearly half his Premiership matches.

Only three goalkeepers are ever-present in the Premiership this season: Crystal Palace's Kevin Miller, Southampton's Paul Jones and Wimbledon's Neil Sullivan. One other oddity: all eight of Sheffield Wednesday's clean sheets have been recorded at home.

Premiership clean sheets 1997-98

Man United	17
Arsenal	15
Blackburn	11
Chelsea	11
Coventry	11
Leeds	11
Leicester	11
Liverpool	11
Bolton	10
Derby	9
Newcastle	9
Tottenham	9
Wimbledon	9
Aston Villa	8
Everton	8
Sheff Wed	8
Southampton	7
West Ham	6
Barnsley	6
C Palace	5

Top of the shot-stoppers

Goalkeepers who have kept 50 or more Premiership clean sheets

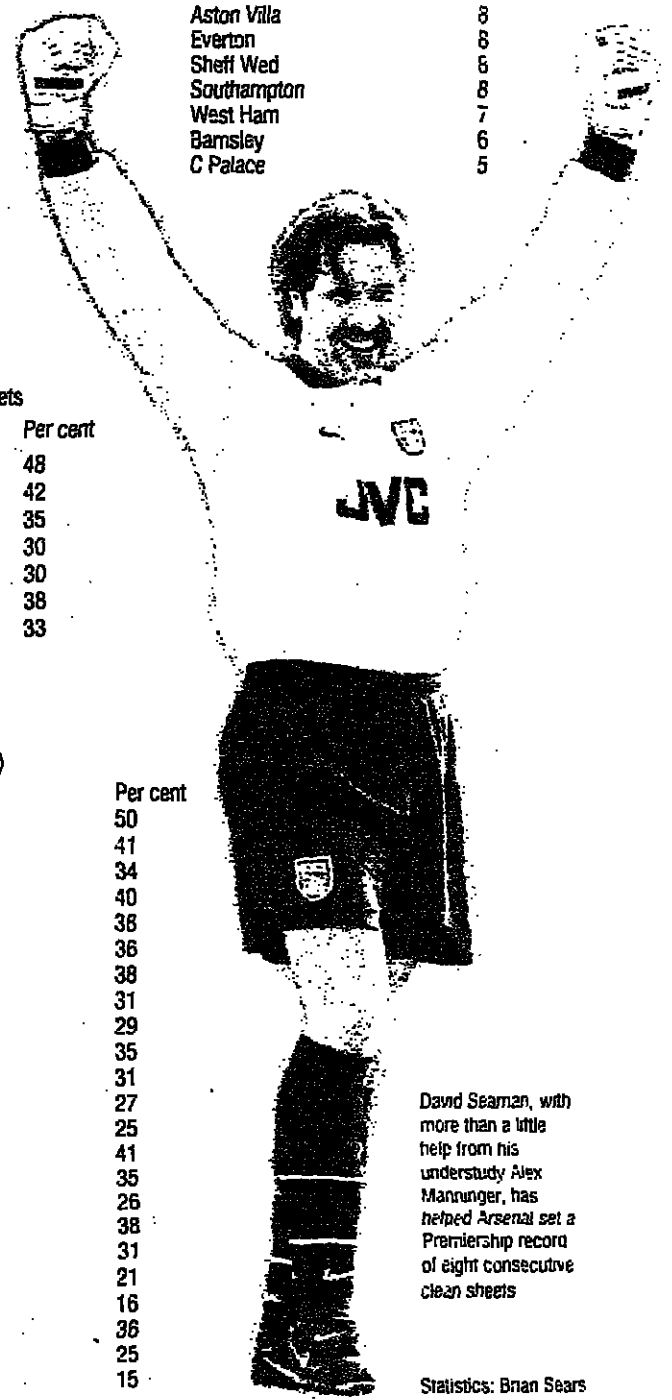
	Clean sheets	Apps	Per cent
Schmeichel (Man Utd)	103	216	48
Seaman (Arsenal)	82	193	42
James (Liverpool)	66	188	35
Flowers (Blackburn)	66	218	30
Southall (Everton)	62	207	30
Martyn (Leeds)	56	146	38
Bosnich (A Villa)	52	158	33

* Not including yesterday's Manchester United-Liverpool match

They shall not pass

Premiership clean sheets 1997-98 (minimum 10 appearances)

	Clean sheets	Apps	Per cent
Schmeichel (Man Utd)	15	30	50
James (Liverpool)	11	27	41
Martyn (Leeds)	11	32	34
Keller (Leicester)	10	25	40
De Goey (Chelsea)	10	26	38
Brannagan (Bolton)	10	28	36
Seaman (Arsenal)	9	24	38
Poom (Derby)	9	29	31
Sullivan (Wimbledon)	9	31	29
Flowers (Blackburn)	8	23	35
Bosnich (A Villa)	8	26	31
Pressman (Sheff Wed)	8	30	27
Jones (Southampton)	7	32	25
Given (Newcastle)	7	17	41
Ogilzovic (Coventry)	6	23	26
Walker (Tottenham)	6	13	38
Forrest (West Ham)	5	16	31
Myhre (Everton)	5	24	21
Watson (Barnsley)	5	31	16
Miller (C Palace)	5	11	36
Hedman (Coventry)	4	12	25
Southall (Everton)	4	13	15
Hilop (Newcastle)	2	13	
Miklosko (West Ham)	0	13	



David Seaman, with more than a little help from his understudy Alex Manninger, has helped Arsenal set a Premiership record of eight consecutive clean sheets

Statistics: Brian Sears

Crystal Palace v Leicester

Paul Warnist, who has been out since breaking his leg on 3 January, may return today for Crystal Palace. The versatile former Blackburn player has been in full training this week, although he missed out on a chance to build up his match fitness when a midweek reserve match was postponed. Stinkens (Leeds) Shipperley and Matt Jensen also hope to play after being treated for minor injuries. They stayed behind while the rest of the first-team squad visited Italy for a three-day training trip. Leicester City striker Tony Cottee will miss the trip to Palace after aggravating a calf strain. Graham Fenton, years certain to win a rare starting place in attack because Ian Marshall is still out with a groin strain. Otherwise, manager Martin O'Neill is expected to name the side and draw 1-1 with Coventry at Fribert Street last weekend. Defender Rob Uththorne starts a three-match ban.

Everton v Leeds

Everton will recall Carl Tiler after suspension, but are still without the banned Steven Bile for today's visit of Leeds. Tiler is expected to take over in defence from teenager Richard Dunne, who played at Tottenham last weekend and was part of the Everton side that reached the FA Youth Cup final on Tuesday. Another youngster, Gavin McCann, made his full debut at White Hart Lane and should hold his place in midfield to play in his first senior game at Goodison Park. Everton have won one League game in their last six. Leeds manager George Graham is likely to name an unchanged side following the 3-1 midweek win over Chelsea. Rod Wallace is available again after shaking off a groin injury, but will not start because of the dynamic partnership between Jimmy Hasselbaink and Harry Kewell. Bruno Ribeiro is out with a groin problem, while David Hopkin has recovered from his eye injury. Leeds have won five of their last six Premiership matches to move to fourth in the table.

Southampton v Wimbledon

Matt Le Tissier will miss today's game through suspension. Le Tissier is serving a one-match ban after being booked for the fifth time this season in the victory over Liverpool two weeks ago. England Under-21 striker Kevin Davies could replace Le Tissier after returning from a two-month injury absence against Sheffield Wednesday last week. Midfielder Carlton Palmer is recalled after a one-match ban. Matthew Oakley misses the match with a twisted knee and winger Andy Williams is ruled out with a broken nose.

Mark Kennedy hopes to make his Wimbledon debut over the Easter programme and may feature today. Kennedy, signed from Liverpool for £1.5m, has a hand injury, but said: "I am pushing to play myself over the Easter holiday weekend." Apart from the possible inclusion of Kennedy, Joe Foweraker is likely to field the same side that drew 0-0 with Bolton last week. The Dons, still not clear of the relegation zone, have won one League game in their last five.

West Ham v Derby

Derby manager Jim Smith must decide whether to give Russell Hoult another chance in goal or recall the fit-again first-choice Mart Poom. Hoult came in two weeks ago at Coventry when Poom injured a shoulder in training and the Estonian international was on the bench last Sunday against Chelsea. Captain Igor Stimac returns from a one-match ban to replace the injured Jacob Laursen in defence and Stefano Eraso should also back after missing two games with a hamstring tear.

West Ham manager Harry Redknapp will recall Israeli midfielder Eyal Berkovi to face the Rams after dropping him for the 2-0 defeat at Aston Villa last Saturday. Redknapp said: "He is a tremendous player, one of the best. But you have to pick teams to win games and we need squad players we can shuffle around." Redknapp has no new injury worries but Paul Ineson is still struggling with a groin strain. Tim Bradner and Ludek Miloski are also still out.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

	P	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Form	Remaining matches
1 Man Utd	34	67	+39	12	1	2	38	-9	8	4	5	26	17	DLWWWD	18 Apr Tottenham, 27 Apr Chelsea, 4 May Liverpool, 10 May Spurs, 12 May
2 Arsenal	30	60	+23	11	2	2	30	9	6	7	2	19	17	DWWWWD	18 Apr Tottenham, 18 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
3 Liverpool	32	55	+20	10	2	4	31	15	5	8	3	24	30	LWDWDD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
4 Leeds	33	54	+15	9	3	5	27	17	7	3	6	23	18	WWLWWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
5 Chelsea	32	51	+23	9	2	3	28	12	7	1	10	32	26	LWLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
6 Blackburn	31	51	+10	10	3	3	26	22	4	6	5	14	30	WLLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
7 West Ham	31	47	+14	11	3	1	32	10	3	2	11	12	36	DDWWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
8 Derby	31	45	+13	10	3	3	28	14	3	3	5	16	27	LWLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
9 Aston Villa	33	45	-2	8	3	6	24	21	5	3	6	16	21	WWLWW	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
10 Coventry	31	44	+1	7	7	1	22	14	4	4	8	15	22	WWLWD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
11 Southampton	32	43	-3	10	1	5	27	18	-3	3	10	14	26	WWLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
12 Leicester	31	41	+3	5	8	3	17	12	5	3	7	19	26	WLWLL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
13 Sheff Wed	32	40	-14	9	4	4	28	22	2	3	10	18	36	LWLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
14 Wimbledon	31	37	-4	5	5	7	16	19	4	3	11	17	17	DDLLD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
15 Newcastle	31	36	-7	6	5	6	17	18	3	4	7	11	17	DDLLD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
16 Tottenham	32	35	-16	6	6	4	19	20	3	2	11	14	25	WLDWD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
17 Everton	32	34	-11	6	3	6	20	22	-2	7	8	14	25	DDLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
18 Bolton	32	31	-19	5	6	3	16	16	1	5	10	13	32	LLWWD	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
19 Barnsley	32	31	-40	6	3	6	22	29	-3	1	15	11	44	WWLLL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May
20 C Palace	31	26	-27	0	4	10	8	29	-6	5	6	19	25	LLLWL	Monday Chelsea, 19 Apr Arsenal, 25 Apr Everton, 29 Apr Bolton, 2 May Liverpool, 6 May Manchester, 10 May Aston Villa, 13 May

FAIR PLAY LEAGUE

	Played	Red	Yellow	Pts	Ave
1 G Walsby	17	7	78	103	6.06
2 G Poot	17	7	69	103	6.06
3 M Reed	17	7	72	82	5.13
4 G Barber	17	7	70	65	4.72
5 J Rennie	17	3	63	78	4.59
6 D Elbery	16	4	61	81	4.50
7 D Quin	16	3	58	77	4.44
8 J Winter	16	2	56	70	4.38
9 A Wilson	16	2	56	78	4.71
10 S Dunn	16	2	48	55	3.43
11 K Budge	17	4	43	63	3.71
12 R Ray	16	2	49	59	3.69
13 P Jones	16	2	53	63	3.93
14 P Alcock	16	1	48	54	3.38
15 B Barry	16	1	49	54	3.38
16 G Ashby	17	2	47	57	3.35
17 J Gallagher	16	2	42	52	3.25
18 S Lodge	16	1	46	46	2.88
19 M Boderham	17	0	49	59	3.47

Premiership matches only. Red cards: Spots. Yellow: Tds.

UNFAIR PLAY LEAGUE

UNFAIR PLAY LEAGUE					
	Played	Red	Yellow	Pts	Ave
1 Everton	32	5	96	93	29
2 Coventry	31	5	56	63	25
3 Bolton	32	5	57	52	25
4 Arsenal	31	3	62	77	24
5 Chelsea	32	3	69	78	24
6 Leeds	33	3	65	80	24
7 Barnsley	32	4	51	71	22
8 C Palace	32	2	61	71	22
9 Blackburn	31	3	51	65	21
10 Bolton	32	3	52	67	21
11 Derby	32	1	62	67	21
12 Sheff Wed	32	5	51	66	20
13 West Ham	32	3	49	64	20
14 Newcastle	31	2	49	59	19
15 Man Utd	33	0	56	66	17
16 Tottenham	32	1	47	52	16
17 Liverpool	31	1	43	48	15
18 Leicester	31	2	36	43	15
19 Wimbledon	31	1	44	49	14
20 Villa	33	1	45	45	13

(Red cards: 5pts; Yellow, 1pt)

(Not including visitors): Manchester United 49-13

Coulthard maintains McLaren's grip

Motor racing

By David Tremayne
in Buenos Aires

THE ATMOSPHERE of the paddock was as flat here yesterday as the topography of the race-track in Buenos Aires. Parc Almirante Brown, as much a contrast with the Brazilian Grand Prix a fortnight ago as was the performance there of the McLaren and the Ferraris.

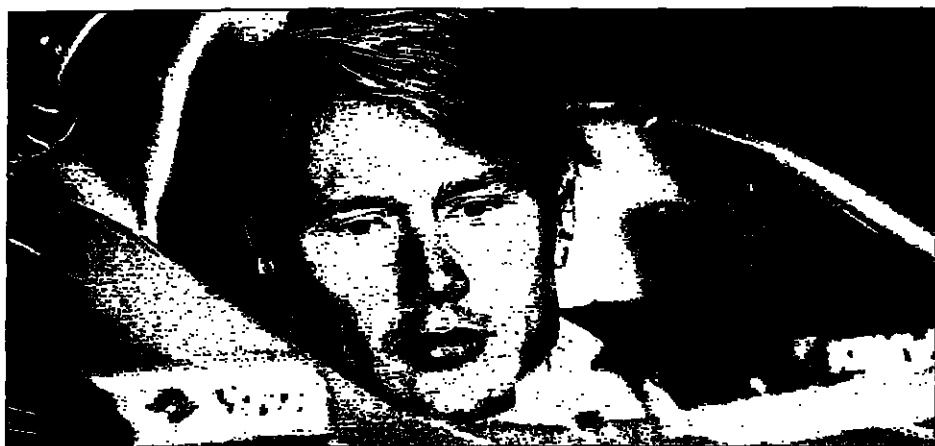
At Interlagos all the talk was of protest and controversy, as the Italian team argued successfully against its British rival's unusual braking system. Here, however, it is as if everybody is on their best behaviour, aware perhaps of the tarnish that has marred Formula One's global image since the controversial outcome of the Australian Grand Prix in March.

Yet, as the McLaren chief,

Ron Dennis, carefully continued to play down the dominance of his silver cars, the World Championship leader, Mika Hakkinen, who has become something of a human disaster area when it comes to public speaking, amused his audience while trying to outpace his competitors.

"I don't think they can catch us," Hakkinen smirked cheerfully, blaming illness for his apparently morose expression in the immediate aftermath of his Brazilian triumph. Vowing to work harder still to maintain the edge that has garnered him an eight-point lead in the drivers' championship, he concluded: "Unless the regulations are changed, or something like that, it will take a miracle to catch us."

As far as past and present champions Michael Schumacher and Jacques Villeneuve are concerned, that miracle may be round and black and



Mika Hakkinen prepares for yesterday's practice session. Photograph: Daniel Luna/APF

have the name Goodyear stamped on the side. In an effort to get on terms with the Bridgestone tyres used so successfully thus far by McLaren, Goodyear has responded with a wider front tyre here to give better front-end grip.

"I expect to make a step forward here which may even give us a chance to get between the McLaren guys," Schumacher said. "They have done the right job, which we know we haven't done yet. But we know where we have to improve, and we are fairly confident we can do that. We had to take steps back-

wards at the beginning of our car's development because of a problem with the reliability of the exhaust system. That cost us some performance, which we expect to get back in time for Imola in two weeks. Goodyear is working hard and making improvements."

Heinz-Harald Frentzen, Villeneuve's team-mate at Williams, suggested that it might be the middle of the season before the modifications come on stream. "I'm not interested in waiting for mid-season before we get on terms with McLaren," Schumacher said. "I want to get the job done earlier."

The German used a combination of the new tyres, a more powerful engine and a high-downforce rear wing to good effect yesterday when he set the fastest practice time of the morning as his partner, Eddie Irvine, split the Williams duo.

But as McLaren admitted to taking it easy, David Coulthard pushed up to second place right in Schumacher's wheel-tracks. Hakkinen was a relaxed eighth behind the Jordans of Ralf Schumacher and Damon Hill.

"The track was dirty to begin with," a McLaren spokesman said, "so there was no point in trying too hard too soon." Let the others clean up the track, was the inference. When you have the advantage, you can get away with that.

Rain blighted the anticipated confrontation when practice resumed in the afternoon, but as the track dried in the closing minutes Coulthard pushed easily ahead of Schumacher by almost one second. Hakkinen improved to third place before spinning in the tricky conditions, but at least one of the McLarens had restored the status quo.

Details, Digest, page 26

Menu still the man to beat

By Nick Phillips

LAST YEAR'S dominant partnership of Alain Menu and Williams-Renault will be the combination to beat again, when the British Touring Car Championship swings into action at Thruxton on Easter Monday.

This time, however, the competition is much better prepared with four of the other seven manufacturers involved already able to match or beat the Renaults in pre-season testing.

The Series organiser, Toca, has also introduced a raft of rule changes, which bring with them compulsory pit-stops and Indy 500-style qualifying sessions. Add in a handful of appearances later in the season from Nigel Mansell and the mix looks ap-
petising.

The man most likely to beat Menu, on pre-season form is Honda's James Thompson. The 23-year-old Yorkshireman is the youngest driver in the field, and he is not afraid to tip himself for the drivers' championship.

Thompson's confidence is based on more than the impetuosity of youth. The Honda Accord which he drives has been one of the best cars in the BTCC for the past two seasons and now, with Prodrive - the team which took Colin McRae to the World Rally Championship - in its second year of running the project and fully settled in, it promises to become the title aspirant's weapon of choice.

Joining the Renaults of Menu, and his aggressive young team-mate Jason Plato, and Honda at the front of the field is likely to be Volvo where regular race-winner Rickard Rydell has a new team mate in a refugee from the high-profile world of Formula One, the Italian Gianni Morbidelli. Rydell said: "We've been testing together quite a lot and he's been good to work with."

Their S40s look to have hit top form just in time for Monday's race. The gap to the rest is small though and Nissan, Audi and Peugeot have all shown the potential to win races, while Vauxhall and Ford both also look in much better shape than they did last year. In short no one can be dismissed out of hand.

Sheer speed will not be the only factor. As Thompson says: "This year, even if you have the quickest car, you might not win the race." That is because of the new rules, which make big changes to the race formats. As before there will be two full-points rounds at each meeting (26 rounds in all), but the first race each weekend (the Sprint) has been shortened and will have a grid decided in the One-Shot Showdown, an Indy-style one at a time single-lap shoot-out.

The second race (the Feature) will be longer and have a grid decided conventionally, but during it each driver must pit and change two wheels.

The idea is to shuffle the pack, so that the same names are not always at the front, and to introduce an element of strategy to the races. That will be further encouraged by a modification to the points system which gives every driver who leads the race an extra point (only one per driver, per race).

The chances are that it will be Renault, Honda or Volvo drivers who triumph in Monday's races, but it is no foregone conclusion. If the rule changes have the desired effect they will really have to work for their glory and the spectators will be the real winners.

1998 ENTRY LIST: 1 Alain Menu Renault Laguna; 2 Jason Plato Renault Laguna; 3 James Thompson Honda Accord; 4 Rickard Rydell Volvo S40; 5 Gianni Morbidelli Honda Accord; 6 James Thompson Honda Accord; 7 John Branniff Audi A4; 8 David Leslie Nissan Primera GT; 9 Tim Harvey Peugeot 406; 11 Paul Edwards Peugeot 406; 12 Van Merksteijn Audi A4; 14 Gert Thoenen Volvo S40; 16 Mark Lommer Vauxhall Vectra; 17 Roger Moen Honda Accord; 18 Jonny Davenport Opel Vectra; 19 Tony Stewart Renault Laguna; 20 Anthony Reid Nissan Primera; 21 Steve Lee Nissan Primera; 22 Neil Horne Ford Mondeo; 23 Craig Boddie Ford Mondeo; 24 Peter Kim Honda Accord; 25 Nigel Mansell Ford Mondeo; 26 John Cleland Vauxhall Vectra; 27 Fabrizio Giovanardi Alfa Romeo; 28 Alan Menzies Nissan Primera; 29 David Waters Vauxhall Vectra; 30 John Cleland Vauxhall Vectra.

1998 RACE DATES: April 12/13: Rounds 1/2 Thruxton International April 26/27: Rounds 3/4 Silverstone; In-Park National May 2/3: Rounds 5/6 Donington Park May 16/17: Rounds 7/8 Oulton Park May 22/23: Rounds 9/10 Oulton Park May 29/30: Rounds 11/12 Donington Park June 5/6: Rounds 13/14 Silverstone July 12/13: Rounds 15/16 Thruxton August 15/16: Rounds 17/18 Thruxton August 22/23: Rounds 19/20 Thruxton August 29/30: Rounds 21/22 Thruxton August 31/September 1: Rounds 23/24 Thruxton September 12/13: Rounds 25/26 Silverstone International September 26/27

Robinson provides Wigan's inspiration

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

St Helens	18
Wigan	38

TWO moments of individual ability and a surprise lit up and ultimately decided a distinctly average Bank Holiday derby in the JJB Sports Super League at Knowsley Road yesterday.

A mistake-ridden match was locked at six-all with half-time approaching when Jason Robinson took the ball well inside his own half, ran laterally to skirt past four attempts to tackle him, and then straightened up along the left touchline to devastating effect.

Andy Haigh chased him all the way and Bobbie Goulding had the perfect angle to get across and tackle a player with less pace into touch, but Robinson was far too quick for both.

If Robinson was a predictable tormentor, then Wigan's next killer blow was delivered by one of their emerging stars. John Monie has been singing the praises of Lee Gilmour ever since he returned to the club this winter, and Gilmour showed an impressive glimpse of his exciting potential yesterday.

Starting the match on the wing but moved into the pack by this stage, Gilmour ran onto Henry Paul's pass and beat a series of tackles. Andy Farrell's two goals put Wigan 12 points ahead at half-time, a gap that never looked like being closed.

"We contributed to our own downfall," said the St Helens coach, Shaun McRae. "We just missed too many tackles. Robinson's try was freakish, but that's the sort of thing he does week after week. When Gilmour scored, he beat four tackles; that's not a failure of the defensive pack, that's a case of individual failings."

McRae gambled on starting with Tommy Martyn and the gamble failed, not because of recent knee problems but because, with typically bad luck, he picked up another leg injury that saw him visiting in hospital yet again.

Despite hobbling around for much of the match, Martyn did grab the try that briefly brought St Helens back into contention, sneaking in from a marginally outside position to touch down Goulding's clever reverse-kick.

Gary Connolly soon put Wigan back on course, capitalising on good handling by Paul and Mick Cassidy. Stephen Holgate's powerful run through Sean Long's tackle then gave them the momentum that led to the predictably excellent Farrell sending in Tony Smith and, with Farrell completing his tally of seven goals, Wigan were well in control going into the last 10 minutes.

There was some small consolation for the well-beaten Saints when the otherwise quiet Paul Newlove wrestled his way out of Terry O'Connor's tackle to score, but even then it was Wigan who finished the stronger, Robinson's run putting them on the attack again and Farrell and Cassidy allowing Paul Johnson to sell a dummy and score in the corner.

It has almost been a tradition in recent years for Wigan-Saints derbies to start in a completely misleading way. This was no exception, Haigh taking Karl Hammond's pass and beating the tackles of Smith, Cassidy and Kris Radlinski to score after only 87 seconds.

Goulding's goal put Saints six points up, but Wigan responded through the first of Farrell's goals and then a try from Radlinski that sprang from the Wigan captain's long pass.

"It was one of those matches where you wished the hooter had sounded after two minutes," McRae said. Unfortunately for Wigan's opponents this season, playing against them will require them to be on their mettle for rather longer than that.

St Helens: Ashworth; C Smith, Haigh, Newlove, Sullivan; Martyn, Goulding, Goldsmit, Hamilton, O'Neill, Joynt, Southgate, Hammond. Substitutes used: Long, Pidd, Vennart, D Smith, Anderson.

Wigan: Radlinski; Gilmour, Connolly, Moore, Robinson; Paul, T Smith, Cassidy, Farrell, Johnson. Substitutes used: Cowie, Holgate, Johnson. Referee: R Smith (Castleford).



Wigan's Henry Paul bursts through the St Helens defence at Knowsley Road yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

Rhinos target danger man Paul Johnson's try adds to Broncos misery

THE Australian forward Jamie Mathieu is hoping to get the better of his best man when Leeds Rhinos take on the reigning Super League champions, Bradford Bulls, at Odsal tomorrow.

Mathieu, 25, signed from North Queensland Cowboys 15 months ago, is looking forward to getting to grips with New Zealand prop Tahi Reihans in a match that could attract Super League's first 20,000 crowd.

"Tahi was best man at my wedding and we go back a long way, so it would be nice to put one over on him," joked Mathieu. "I played with Danny Peacock many years ago at the Gold Coast and he'll be a big threat to us. But if we can contain him and Robbie Paul, I feel we can do it."

Matthew Elliott, Bradford's coach, has pinpointed the Rhinos as genuine Grand Final contenders, and accepts that his team will need to improve on their performance against Hud-

dersfield in last week's Super League opener if the Bulls are to make it seven successive wins over their big local rivals.

"We were solid against Huddersfield without being great," said Elliott, whose side overcame the Giants 38-8 at the McAlpine Stadium. "We'll need to play better than last Friday to take the points against Leeds."

"I went to their game last Sunday and saw features of Leeds' play that haven't been there in recent years. They seem to have a bit more shape and direction. They also have a lot of enthusiasm and aggression in their team at present. It will be a bigger challenge than it has been in recent years."

The Leeds coach, Graham Murray, was delighted with his side's 30-8 opening win over Warrington, and also sees the highly rated Kiwi Paul as the main threat to his side tomorrow.

"They're a very powerful side and that's the way they play the game," said Murray. "Even

Round-up

MARK JOHNSON scored a try two minutes from time to give Hull a 6-4 victory over the London Broncos yesterday. It ensured that the Sharks' Super League campaign has got off to a flyer with two wins from two matches and that London's miserable start to the season continues.

The Broncos lost their opening league game at home to Halifax last week and they then saw their coach, Tony Currie, return to Australia because of a family illness.

Hull only led 2-0 at half-time despite playing with a stiff wind behind them and London went ahead on 59 minutes. Damien Chapman burst through the defence and exchanged passes with Nick Marlon before crashing over but the scrum-half missed the relatively simple conversion.

Hull turned down two chances to kick at goal from close range in the dying minutes as they attempted to claim the victory rather than settle for a draw.

They then ran the ball on the last tackle and Hiro Okesene, Alan Hunte and Graeme Hallas - who had kicked his side into the lead with a first half penalty - combined to set up Johnson and the South African winger dived over in the corner.

A superb first-half show put Salford Reds on their way to their first win of the season in the JJB Super League at Wilderspool yesterday. Salford romped into a 22-4 interval lead against an outclassed Warrington side, eventually winning 37-4.

Darryl Van de Velde, the Warrington coach, said: "It was a very poor performance and we can have no excuses. There was little enthusiasm from our side."

Kelleher double sinks spirited Russians

Hockey

By Peter Colwill

SLOUGH made a confident start on the first day of the European Club Championship here yesterday beating Donchanka Volgogradsk 6-1.

The Russian side put up a spirited first-half performance, although Slough led by two goals at the interval, but were overwhelmed after the start of the second half as Slough slammed in four goals in a devastating ten minute spell. Sarah

Kelleher, who along with Karen Brown was hugely influential in midfield, fired Slough into a sixth-minute lead from the second of eleven penalty corners but Slough could make little further headway until Julia Robertson turned in a rebound from a corner seven minutes before half-time.

Jane Smith produced a sharp save from Oxana Bolko straight after half-time but it was another corner slipped to the predatory Kelleher which started the landslide.

Sue MacDonald scored the

fourth goal, their only one to come from open play, which was quickly followed by a successful penalty stroke taken by Brown and a flick goal at a penalty corner by Smith.

In the other pool Edinburgh drew their opening match 2-2 with Real Sociedad from San Sebastian. Both Scottish goals mirrored Slough's dominance at set pieces, coming as they did from penalty corners, with Alison Grant sweeping in a rebound to give them the lead and Val Neil blasting in the equaliser from

their third and final corner, although the Spaniards protested they were not ready.

Slough play the Italian club Lorenzoni today, while Edinburgh take on Kolos Borispol from the Ukraine.

POOL A: Russia (Slough) 4; Kolos Borispol (Ukraine) 2; Edinburgh 2; Real Sociedad (Spain) 2. Pool B: Slough 6; Donchanka Volgogradsk (Russia) 1; HSC (Netherlands) 0.

POOL C: Netherlands 1; Spain 5; Scotland 1; England 2; France 1; Girls under-18: Scotland 1; France 0; Germany 2; England 1; Netherlands 0; Spain 0; Girls under-18: Netherlands 2; France 0; England 3; Spain 3; Germany 7; Scotland 1.

Teddington's impressive start

By Bill Colwill
in Hertogenbosch

TEDDINGTON opened impressively in beating Stroitel of Belarus 3-1 in the European Cup-Winners' Cup in 's Hertogenbosch yesterday but may well regret that they did not score more goals. Their coach, Jon Royce, commenting on their performance, said: "From green to tee first class, putting weak."

With Jason Laslett dominating the midfield along with Phil McGuire it was Teddington all the way and it was no surprise when

Nick Conway opened the scoring 21 minutes into the game.

Peter Kermode, who had just replaced the injured Danny Hayden, provided a perfect cross for Conway to dive in at the post to prod the ball home.

Four minutes into the second half a splendid move involving Tony Colclough, Laslett and Conway was rewarded with a penalty corner. Conway's strike was illegally stopped on the line with McGuire converting the resulting penalty stroke. Conway then burst through to score his second with a pow-

erful individual effort. With just two minutes left, Vitscheslav scored at Stroitel's only penalty corner of the game - so much had Teddington dominated the exchanges.

Teddington's opponents today, Ekaterinburg of Russia, caused the day's surprise beating Poczowiec of Poznan 2-0. Teddington: J. Edwards; S. Hedges; J. Valls; S. Daniels; B. Gurney; A. Colclough; D. Hayden; J. Laslett; P. McGuire; J. Hesk; N. Conway. Substitutes used: C. Mearns; A. Ellison; P. Kermode; A. P. Valls.

Stroitel: V. Bondarenko; H. Karpovskiy; V. Stasov; S. Dzygachev; A. Gennadiyev; A. Buzhikov; G. Kopylovskiy; I. Kalkachuk; V. Kalkachuk; S. Kalkachuk. Substitutes used: I. Kalkachuk; S. Kalkachuk; A. Kalkachuk.

Ekaterinburg: S. Graham (Wid) & E.J. van Putten (Ned).



Saturday 11 April 1998

Premiership football: Alex Ferguson's title chasers fail to capitalise on Johnsen's early goal and are thwarted by 10-man Liverpool

United undone by sinner Owen

By Guy Hodgson

Manchester United
Liverpool

MANCHESTER UNITED'S intention to hinder Arsenal's hot pursuit of the Premiership title with the weight of their results came apart at Old Trafford yesterday when they failed to beat Liverpool. A planned act of discouragement became a source of hope for Highbury instead.

Arsenal now have four games in hand and are only seven points adrift of a United side whose dejection at failing to win will be compounded because Liverpool were handicapped by playing with only 10 men for more than half the match.

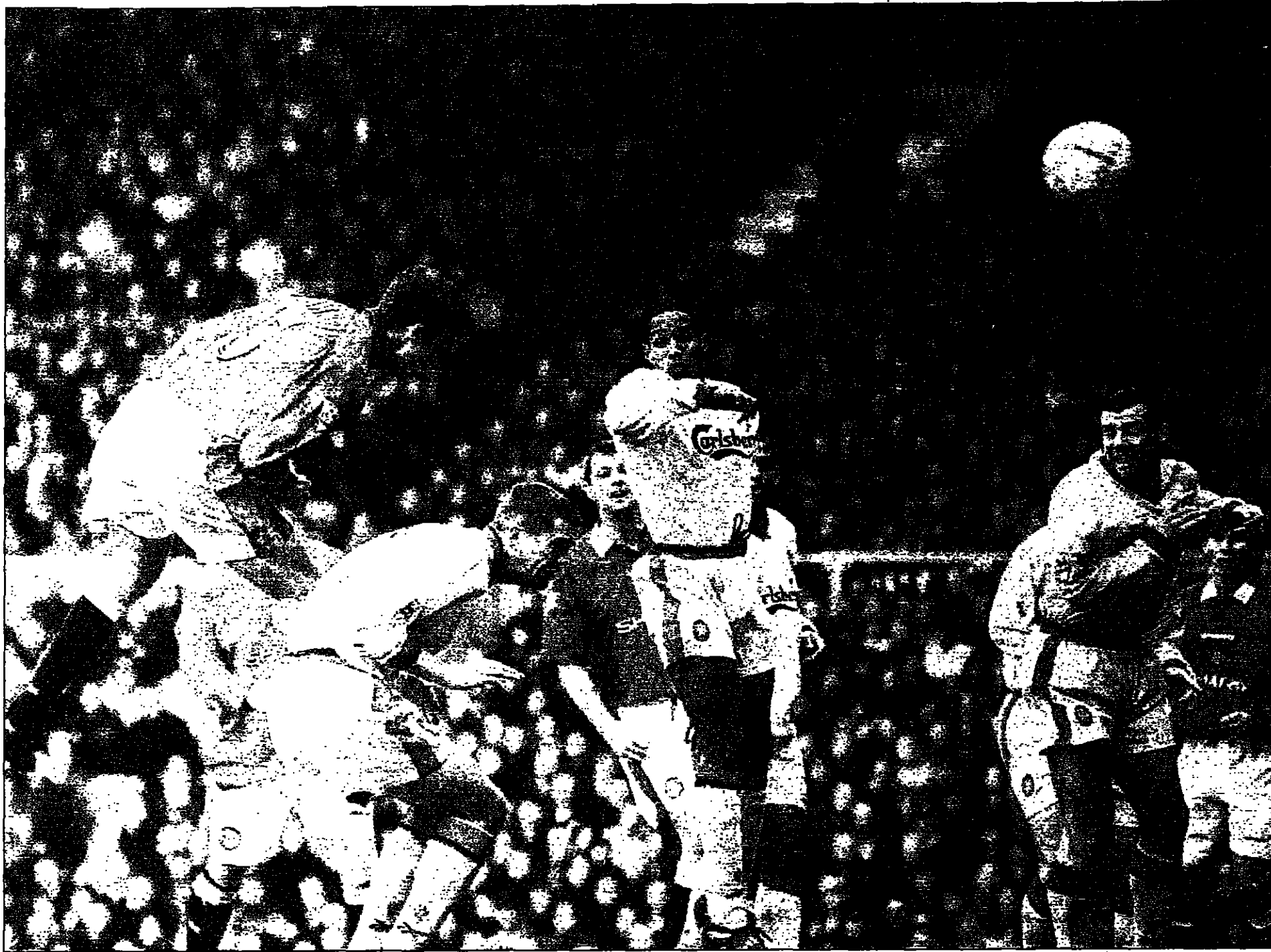
Michael Owen equalised Ronny Johnsen's goal and then was sent off for two bookable offences, the second a dreadful late lunge into Johnsen's ankle. The Norwegian central defender took no further part and the game also petered out into a result that will satisfy neither side.

United's win at Blackburn on Monday had set the parameters for this match, in ways more than points. Alex Ferguson, the United manager, had been displeased about his team's performance, particularly in the first half and he gave vent in yesterday's programme. "I think our supporters have the right to expect to see us at least fight like champions. We let them down."

Scathing that may have been, but the United manager had seen enough in a second-half display that converted a 1-0 deficit into a 3-1 win to stick with his team. That meant no place in the starting line-up for Teddy Sheringham, whose star seems to be in the descent.

In the Liverpool side there was Paul Ince, who beforehand had pleaded that his record in his Old Trafford years demanded respect from the United supporters. Some hope. At the first mention of his name the ground exploded into an orgy of derision. Thanks for past services, Paul. Ince's response was a crunching tackle on David Beckham to propel Liverpool forward, although it was United who almost took the lead after a minute. Dominic Matteo was sold short by a pass, had the ball flicked from his feet by Ryan Giggs and suddenly the visiting rearguard had been stripped bare.

Giggs burst through only to have his shot blocked by the advancing Brad Friedel. Still the



Ronny Johnsen rises above the Liverpool defence to put Manchester United into the lead at Old Trafford yesterday

Photograph: Ross Kinnaird/Allsport

danger had not gone, the rebound falling to Paul Scholes, whose shot beat the Liverpool goalkeeper's race back to goal but was cleared off the line by Phil Babb.

United had been halted then, but it was a temporary block because they took the lead after 11 minutes. This time last season Liverpool had been untripped at Anfield largely due to their inability to deal with corners and they succumbed again.

They could not say they were not given a warning either, because the build-up to the goal had included a corner at which Nicky Butt had a free header at the far post. Liverpool

was let off then at the expense of another corner, but when David Beckham arched another cross Johnsen was similarly neglected and he headed powerfully past Friedel.

Within two minutes Liverpool almost made amends thanks to Owen. Earlier in the day no less a figure than Pele had sung the praises of the 18-year-old striker, anticipating an exciting World Cup for him. If you are good enough you are old enough to have the Brazilian's message and Owen underlined that with a glorious piece of skill.

There seemed little hope for him as he began running at Gary Pallister and Denis Irwin on the

right flank, but he skipped by them and then pulled the ball back for Steve McManaman. A gaping hole had been ripped in the United defence that was only filled by Gary Neville, throwing his body in front of McManaman's shot.

Gary Neville had a volley just wide for United and then Peter Schmeichel tipped a shot from Ince round a post. Liverpool gradually gained parity in terms of chances and got there in terms of goals after 35 minutes.

McManaman wantonly missed an opportunity after Danny Murphy's astute pass had split the United defence, but before Liverpool could rue that

opportunity they were presented with another thanks to a mix-up between Gary Pallister and Schmeichel. Either could have reached an innocent-looking pass but both left it to the other and Owen nipped in between them, beating the United goalkeeper with an impudent chip.

It was Owen's last beneficial act because within five minutes he was sent off. The striker had already been booked for a lunge at Schmeichel and when he was late again on Johnsen the referee had little option but to dismiss him.

Down to 10 men, circumstance forced Liverpool to defend what they had and the

second half became a game of patience in which United's greater share of possession was countered by Liverpool's readiness to strike on the break.

It was a question of who would slip first and it was almost United after 59 minutes when two reckless tackles by David May and Pallister freed Oyvind Leonhardsen. His shot was low to Schmeichel's right, but the goalkeeper was able to tip it round the post.

At the other end Gary Neville and Butt had shots that flew close to the Liverpool posts. However, it was probably an indication of United's laboured approach work that Sheringham

was introduced just after the hour. The last throw of the dice. Manchester United (4-4-1-1): Schmeichel; G. Neville (Sheringham, 65), Johnsen (May, 53), Pallister, Irwin, Beckham, Butt, P. Neville, Giggs (Thorne, 38), Scholes (Cole, 54). Substitutes not used: Berg, Van der Gouw (16). Liverpool (4-4-1-1): Friedel; Jones, Matteo, Babb, Harrison, McManaman, Rodgers, Ince, Leonhardsen, Murphy (Berg, 75); Owen, Scholes (not used); Keane, Thomas, Carragher, James (16). Referee: G. Poll (Irish).

Football, pages 21-25

Tigana favourite to coach France

JEAN TIGANA, the Monaco coach, whose side knocked Manchester United out of the European Cup, is almost certain to take charge of France after the World Cup.

Aimé Jacquet, the current national coach, leaves in the summer and Tigana, who has the backing of former French manager Michel Platini, is expected to be named next month. Tigana recently agreed to remain at Monaco until 2002, but the contract has not yet been signed.

Tigana's departure is certain to restart speculation that Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, will take over at Monaco, where he spent three seasons as a player in the late 1980s.

However, Hoddle is under contract with England until the European Championships in 2000 and has consistently denied any approach from the Côte d'Azur.

The remaining 110,000 tickets for this summer's World Cup finals will go on sale at 8am on Wednesday 22 April. The French organising committee announced yesterday that the tickets could only be purchased by telephone on a first come, first served basis, with a limit of four tickets per person per match to a maximum of 16 tickets per person overall.

Martin O'Neill, the Leicester City manager, is convinced Emile Heskey will become one of the top strikers in the Premiership and is keen to get his signature on a new deal.

"Things have not gone well for him this season but defenders know he still poses a very serious danger," O'Neill said. "I'm convinced he can score 20 goals a season. If we're going to have any ambition at Leicester we've got to try to keep him."

BATTLE FOR THE MASTERS
page 26

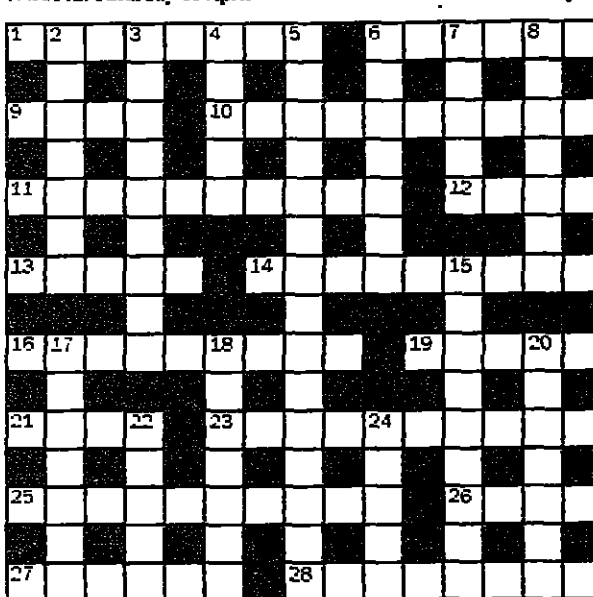
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3582, Saturday 11 April

By Phi

ACROSS

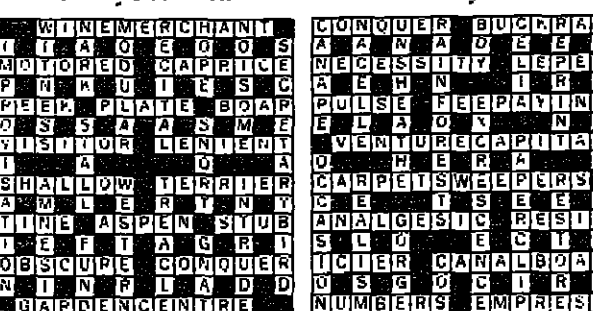
DOWN



- 1 Very large Unionist MP involved in the issue (8)
- 6 Covering a note jotted in one specimen of a book (6)
- 9 Ranch is distant - miles (4)
- 10 Incarceration - here's name given to "bird" by blokes in it (10)
- 11 What'll make the pig calm and composed? (10)
- 12 Party over, with those inside leaving - here's the exit (4)
- 13 and 14 Hardly a stage in the preparation of a Soho show! (5, 9)
- 16 and 19 Attendant at court the earl's gunmen shot (9, 5)
- 21 Composed overtures to comic operas and other larks (4)
- 23 Where you'd find a healthy prisoner? (2, 4, 4)
- 25 Boxing, if it's rigged, puts restraints on hands (10)
- 26 Defensive structure at either end of fight (4)
- 27 Feature of home computer - crucial stuff. (3, 3)
- 28 Cat's tail came down in the trifle, doing for the lot! (8)
- 2 Desert conditions half-wither plant (7)
- 3 Actor and scenery having the feel of yokel-dom? (9)
- 4 Stupid clipped male way of speaking (5)
- 5 Works out how to arrange pictures? (4, 3, 4, 2, 2)
- 6 Company hurry round Lake in boat (7)
- 7 Wanderer's not curtailed wandering? (5)
- 8 Greek woman to criticise girl (7)
- 15 Offended US fleet tangle with RN (9)
- 17 Community breaking one code in destroying the environment (7)
- 18 Showed one chap embracing another (7)
- 20 Expect to move round capital of Romania a bit (7)
- 22 Reduction in severity of attack? Allowed out of bed (3, 2)
- 24 Start acting? (5)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive backhanded copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4918, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: S. Dale, Lewes; S. Tittle, Gosport; D. Hardy, Ely; M. Simons, London NW1; K. Sullivan, London E4.

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Sunday 11 April 1998. See us on a newspaper with the best offer.

ON MONDAY

TWENTY-FOUR PAGE SPORTS SECTION

"I went to Lansdowne Road when Ireland played Liechtenstein in the World Cup qualifier, with 35,000 people there. As I turned to each side of the ground it was like a Mexican wave of people standing up. You had to be there to see it. Incredible. Unbelievable!"



TODAY

TWELVE PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 17



"I think I've created such a following because what you see is what you get. I speak my mind. It upsets a few people but then the ones who don't like it are the ones who are afraid to say it."

Britain's Carl Fogarty talks to Derrick Allsop about his World Superbike challenge, page 17.

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